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TOLL, Debora

AUTEUR DE LA THÈSE - AUTHOR OF THESIS

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Maurice Taylor

DIRECTEUR DE LA THÈSE - THESIS SUPERVISOR

EXAMINATEURS DE LA THÈSE - THESIS EXAMINERS

B. Cousins

C. J. MacDonald

N. Jackson

R. Maclure

J.-M. De Koninck, Ph.D.

LE DOYEN DE LA FACULTÉ DES ÉTUDES  
SUPÉRIEURES ET POSTDOCTORALES

SIGNATURE

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# **The Transfer of Learning: Employees' Lived Experiences**

**Debora K. Toll**

Thesis submitted to the  
Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

**Ph.D in Education**

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As a parting thought - Life is truly good!!! I hope that we will always remember to not take life for granted, to passionately embrace it and to openly follow it wherever it may lead, for therein lies its blessings and riches. God bless!

## **The Transfer of Learning: The Employees' Lived Experiences**

This study sought to understand employees' perceptions of and experiences with the transfer of their learning. It also sought to understand the interplay between the three primary transfer sources and whether adult learning theories are well positioned to address transfer. The overarching research question that guided this study was what were employees' lived experiences with transfer? The subquestions were how do employees transfer their learning, when did transfer enter their learning experiences, and why did they believe that transfer occurred? A hermeneutic phenomenological research design was employed. By allowing the participants' voices to resonate throughout the text, the depth, richness and meaning of their experiences were captured. Seven federal government employees engaged in a formal audiotaped interview, an informal interview and a focus group session.

Eight main themes emerged from the data analysis. Two themes, related to the individuals' characteristics, were the desire to learn and how transfer occurred. Four themes, related to the training program's design and development features, were discourse, application of the learning to life's situations, learning by doing and when transfer entered the learners' learning experience. The last two themes, related to the organizational climate characteristics, were an open and supportive culture, and the major challenges to transfer. The transfer research provided one lens through which the findings were interpreted. Three adult learning theories, self-directed, situated cognition and transformational learning, provided the second lens.

The transfer and adult learning literatures were quite complimentary. The three learning theories however, brought a broader and more comprehensive understanding to many of the participants' transfer experiences. The theories, by illuminating the interplay between the three primary transfer sources, also integrated the quantitative transfer research findings into a more

coherent body of knowledge. This research also contributed to a more fullsome understanding of the three learning theories. Adult education principles and practices appear to be well positioned to enhance employees' transfer efforts as transfer does indeed appear to be a key concept in adult learning. The findings are relevant to adult education practices, and to organizations and employees in better understanding and facilitating transfer.

## Abstract

The employees' ability to continuously and collectively learn, and to apply their learning are critical to their own and their organization's performance. This study, therefore, sought to understand employees' perceptions of and experiences with the application of or, transfer of their learning. It also sought to understand the interplay between the three primary transfer sources. The overarching research question that guided this study was what were employees' lived experiences with transfer? The subquestions were how do employees transfer their learning, when did transfer enter their learning experiences, and why did they believe that transfer occurred? A hermeneutic phenomenological research design was employed. The participants' lived experiences were examined, described and interpreted. By allowing the participants' voices to resonate throughout the text, the depth, richness and meaning of their experiences were captured. Seven federal government employees, at the administrative, professional and managerial levels, comprised the purposeful sample. The participants engaged in a formal audiotaped interview, an informal interview and a focus group session.

Eight main themes emerged from the data analysis. Two themes, related to the individuals' characteristics, were the desire to learn and how transfer occurred. Four themes, related to the training program's design and development features, were discourse, application of the learning to life's situations, learning by doing and when transfer entered the learners' learning experience. The last two themes, related to the organizational climate characteristics, were an open and supportive culture, and the major challenges to transfer. The transfer research, comprised of the individuals' characteristics, training program features and organizational climate characteristics, provided one lens through which the findings were interpreted. Three

adult learning theories, self-directed, situated cognition and transformational learning, provided the second lens.

The transfer and adult learning literatures were quite complimentary. The learning theories however, brought a broader and more comprehensive understanding to many of the participants' transfer experiences. The theories, by illuminating the interplay between the primary transfer sources, integrated the quantitative transfer research findings into a more coherent body of knowledge. This research also contributed to a more fullsome understanding of the learning theories and the difficulties in measuring transfer. Adult education principles and practices appear to be well positioned to enhance employees' transfer efforts as transfer does indeed appear to be a key concept in adult learning.

This study advances our understanding of transfer from the perspective of the employees' "lived" experiences, and of the complexities of transfer. The findings are relevant to adult education practices, and to organizations and employees in better understanding and facilitating transfer.

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## CHAPTER ONE

### Introduction

Economies and organizations around the world continue to experience change at a fast pace. This hastened pace of change requires that organizations and individuals are prepared to meet the demands of those changes. To ensure economic success, a nation must continually and effectively upgrade its human resources (Human Resources and Development Canada (HRDC), 1997). Increasingly, a country's "economic well-being depends on its capacity to make the most effective use of its people and to maintain the skills of its workforce" (Shepherdson, 1997, p. 2).

In terms of the organizations and individuals, the intensifying global competition, new technologies and organizational downsizing are creating a premium on organizational and individual learning. Organizations and individuals must learn continuously and collectively, to remain competitive (Waterman, Waterman & Collard, 1994; Watkins & Marsick, 1993). The individuals' competitive advantage lies in their ability to continuously learn and adapt (Blanchard, 1994; Waterman, et al.) while the organizations' competitive advantage lies in their human capital investments, in the education and training of their workforces (Bassi, Cheney & Van Buren, 1997). Workplace learning is consequently, now regarded as "more strategic to the competitive advantage of both individuals and employers than at any point in all of recorded history" (Bassi, Cheney & Lewis, 1998, p. 51). As John Browne, Chief Executive Officer, British Petroleum (Prokesch, 1997) posited:

Learning is at the heart of a company's ability to adapt to a rapidly changing environment.

It is the key to being able both to identify opportunities that others might not see and to exploit those opportunities rapidly and fully. This means that in order to generate extraordinary value for shareholders, a company has to learn better than its competitors

and apply that knowledge faster and more widely than they do. ... Building and leveraging knowledge, ideas and innovative solutions will be key to success. (p. 147)

From an adult education perspective, the hastened pace of change has precipitated an increased focus on lifelong learning. In fact, adult learning is regarded as “a key to the 21<sup>st</sup> Century” (Sandman, 1998, p. 2). Merriam and Caffarella (1999) suggested that the “nature of a society at a particular point in time determines the emphasis which is placed on adult learning” (p. 5). The current trends in adult education, which portray the adult learner as a working being and employability as of great, national importance, appear to be reflecting the noted global, organizational and individual concerns (Brookfield, 2002; Solar, 1998; Usher, Bryant & Johnston, 1997).

This chapter outlines the context of the research. It discusses the varied forms and rising significance of workplace learning, as well as the financial bottom line of training investments. It then discusses the importance of and introduces the transfer of learning concept, and provides a definition of terms. A discussion of the orientation of the research problem, the purpose of the research, the research design and the significance of the study follows. The context of the adult learning theories which, in addition to the transfer literature, formed the lenses through which this research was framed, is then elaborated. Finally, the general organization of the subsequent chapters is briefly discussed.

### **The Varied Forms of Workplace Learning**

Workplace learning consists of varied forms. These forms include formal, nonformal, informal and incidental learning (Candy & Crebert, 1991; Watkins & Marsick, 1993, Watkins & Marsick, 1992; Marsick & Watkins, 2001). Formally organized education or planned courses which are frequently conducted by consultants, human resources officials, or educational

institutions is one means of ensuring that employees are prepared to meet the knowledge, attitude and skills demands of today's workplaces. Formal education or training is defined as "formally structured and sequentially organized [learning opportunities], in which learners follow a program of study or a series of experiences planned and directed by a teacher or trainer and generally leading to some formal recognition of educational performance" (Statistics Canada, 2001, p. 58). Formal learning is typically classroom based, highly structured and institutionally sponsored (Marsick & Watkins, 2001). Watkins and Marsick (1992) posited that formal training is one answer to helping employees learn but that it is not sufficient in meeting the demands of continuous learning. Table 1 provides a summary of the varied forms of workplace learning.

Nonformal workplace learning, which includes on-the-job training and self-paced learning modules, and informal workplace learning which includes activities such as chatting with colleagues, and picking up useful information in team meetings, newsletters, memoranda and reports, are also critical to employees in meeting the changing workplace demands (Candy & Crebert, 1991). In a similar vein, Watkins and Marsick (1992) defined informal learning as learning that "can be planned or unplanned, but it usually involves some degree of conscious awareness that learning is taking place" (p. 289). Informal learning is not highly structured, involves the learner's intentionality and includes various forms of learning from experience (Garrick, 1998; Livingstone, 1999; Marsick & Watkins, 2001). These learning experiences include for example, self-directed learning, coaching and mentoring strategies, networking and performance planning (Marsick & Watkins, 2001; Watkins & Marsick, 1993). Livingstone (2001) described informal learning as "any activity involving the pursuit of understanding, knowledge or skill which occurs without the presence of externally imposed curricular criteria" (p. 4). Unlike Watkins and Marsick's definition of informal learning, which included planned

and unplanned learning activities, Statistics Canada (2001) defined informal training as “training that is generally acquired while performing regular tasks (learning by doing) at work or, observing somebody else performing them and that is by nature not planned nor structured” (p. 59).

**Table 1**  
**Varied Forms of Workplace Learning**

<b>Formal Learning</b>	planned, classroom based, highly structured, teacher/facilitator led, learner conscious of learning
<b>Informal Learning</b>	planned and unplanned, not highly structured, learner conscious of learning, self directed, mentoring, networking
<b>Incidental Learning</b>	not planned nor structured, largely unintentional and unconscious, learn by mistakes or observing others
<b>Nonformal Learning</b>	on-the-job, self paced learning modules

Incidental learning, on the other hand, defined as learning that “is largely unintentional, unexamined and embedded in people’s closely held belief systems”, is a subset of informal learning (Watkins & Marsick, 1992, p. 289). In incidental learning, the learner learns from mistakes or learns by observing the actions of others. This learning is not planned and is often tacit, unconscious and taken for granted (Garrick, 1998; Marsick & Watkins, 2001). Watkins (1995) posited that workplace learning, therefore, “encompasses what learners do rather than focusing solely on what trainers or developers do in organizations” (p. 3). For this study, workplace learning was defined as “the ongoing formal and informal acquisition, both on and off the job, of individual, team, and organizational skills, knowledge and abilities. It includes a mindset that views every experience as potential learning” (Marsick & Watkins, 1992, p. 11).

## The Rising Significance of Workplace Learning

Job-related education, provided by educational institutions, employers' in-house training programs or consultants, represented 75% of all Canadian adult education and training activities in 1997 (Statistics Canada, 2001). Over four million Canadian adult learners, between the ages of 17 and 64, participated in job-related education in 1997 (HRDC, 2000). This was compared to four million adult learners in 1993 and 1991, representing a 10% increase over the seven year time period (HRDC, 1997; HRDC, 1995).

In the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) countries, participation in job-related training for adults between the ages of 25-64 was 61% in 1994-95 (OECD, 1998). In the United States (U.S.), between 1981 and 1993, there was a 45% increase in the number of workers who received formal company training and a 20% increase in the amount of money employers expended on formal training (Bassi, Benson & Cheney, 1996). In 1994, 90% of all Canadians and 94% of all Americans reported that the main reason for their training efforts was career or job-related (Kapsalis, 1997).

While organizational training expenditures are not available in Canada, in 1995, U.S. organizations expended \$55.3 billion on employer provided, formal employee training (Bassi & Van Buren, 1998). According to the International Data Corporation 2000 industry report, the U.S. corporate training market stood at \$66 billion and was expected to increase at approximately 5% per year (Abernathy, 2001). In 1988, total expenditures on workplace learning in the U. S., composed of the work of consultants, tuition reimbursement programs, in-house training programs, external continuing education programs, self-directed learning programs, quality teams, and study teams were estimated at close to \$210 billion (Watkins, 1995).

The average per capita training and development expenditure in Canada was \$776 in

1998 (Conference Board of Canada, 1999). Organizations in Asia, Australia/New Zealand, Canada, Europe, Japan and the U.S. spent an average of \$627 per employee on training in 1998 (American Society for Training and Development (ASTD), 2000). In comparing 1997 and 1998 figures, increases in training expenditures per employee were 11% and 18% respectively for the U.S. and Canada, while Japan and Europe experienced a decrease in these expenditures (ASTD, 2000). When training was calculated as a percentage of payroll, Canada experienced the largest increase in expenditures, of all six countries, from 1.5 to 2.3 percent in 1997 and 1998, respectively (ASTD, 2000).

Instructor led classroom training was the predominant global form of training delivery in 1998 (Abernathy, 2001; ASTD, 2000; Conference Board of Canada, 1999), as opposed to the more informal means such as on-the-job training, distance education, audio/video media (Statistics Canada, 2001; HRDC, 1997), modular training (MacDonald, Gabriel & Cousins, 2000) or internet training (Driscoll, 1999). In 1994, formal classroom instruction represented 90% of all Canadian adult education and training activities, 87% of all U.S., 94% of Germany's and 89% of Poland's (Kapsalis, 1997). In 1997, 86% of all Canadian adult education and training activities were premised on classroom instruction (Statistics Canada, 2001).

While formal training is the most predominant adult education and training delivery method, informal training definitely has its place. In 1997, for example, approximately 34% of all courses provided by Canadian employers contained an element of on-the-job training (Statistics Canada, 2001). In 1998, approximately one third of all Canadians aged 25 and over, engaged in some type of informal learning activity. The majority of these individuals cited learning predominantly through interactions with other people and through reading books. Computers and the Internet were also cited, although to a lesser degree (Silver, Williams &

McOrmond, 2001).

One Canadian study estimated that 70% of the knowledge that individuals acquired about their jobs was gained through informal learning activities, with the employees spending an average of six hours per week informally learning about their current or future employment (Livingstone, 1999). Livingstone (2002) noted that adults, on average, devote 15 hours per week to informal learning activities with 90% of the adults being able to identify those learning activities as significant. According to the research network for New Approaches to Lifelong Learning, over 95% of all Canadian adults are involved in some form of informal learning (Livingstone, 2001).

While the use of the Internet and intranets to deliver training activities are not as widespread, it was estimated that 19% of all formal training courses were delivered by web-based training, which includes the use of CD-ROMs, diskettes or the Internet (Driscoll, 1999). In many respects, advances in information technologies and changes in society have created “a new paradigm for training” (Khan, 2001, p. 5). The use of the Internet and intranet for training purposes are expected to increase. 81% of the American Society for Training and Development Benchmarking Forum members estimated that the usage of the Internet would increase for internal company training (Bassi, Cheney & Van Buren, 1997). Web-based corporate training is expected to increase from \$2 billion to \$11.5 in the U.S. by 2003 (Abernathy, 2001). Part of this increase is due to extending the training activities to include the education of online customers and distributors concerning a company’s products and services, or customer focused e-learning (Abernathy, 2001). In Canada, the intranet was expected to deliver courses in 16% of all corporate training cases by 2000, while learning technologies were estimated to deliver in approximately 25% of those cases (Conference Board of Canada, 1999).

In Canada, on-the-job training represented a 12% increase over the 1991-1997 time period (5% versus 17%), with distance education remaining relatively constant over this period (5% versus 4%, respectively) (HRDC, 1995; Statistics Canada, 2001). Reading materials and internet training represented 33% and .3 percent respectively, in 1997 (Statistics Canada, 2001). In the U.S., learning technologies and self-paced methods accounted for 5.8 and 7.3% respectively, of all training time in 1996. Other training methods represented 13%, while classroom based training represented 83.8% (Bassi & Van Buren, 1998).

Job-related education and an organization's expenditures on employee training are on the rise, and workplace learning is clearly a global phenomenon. While there are varied forms of workplace learning, instructor led classroom training or formal training remains the predominant global form of delivery. Informal training, and the use of the internet and intranet as training delivery methods are however, expected to increase over time. For the time being, formal training remains well entrenched.

### **Workplace Learning - The Financial Bottom Line**

On the basis of the foregoing discussions, workplace learning, it would seem, is indeed increasingly becoming an organization's and an individual's basis for competitive advantage. Some recent studies have suggested that a company's commitment to workplace learning is linked to its bottom line. According to Koehle (2000), firms that incurred greater employee training costs "had an average total stockholder return (TSR) the following year of 36.9 percent, while firms at the bottom half [i.e., lower employee training costs] had an average TSR of only 19.8 percent" (p. 73). Firms that invested an average of \$1,595 in training costs per employee experienced a "24% increase in gross-profit margins, an increase in income per employee, and a 26% increase in price-to-book ratios relative to firms that invested only an average of \$128 per

employee” (Koehle, 2000, p. 73). A recent Conference Board of Canada (1999) survey also found a positive link between training investments and organizational performance. Participating Conference Board member respondents, who had provided training to their employees, reported a 13.7% increase in organizational productivity, a 14.1% increase in profits and a 5.7% increase in revenues. Corporate investments in employee training and development are also increasingly becoming one of the top means of attracting and retaining talented employees (Koehle, 2000). The type of employees who will make the difference in the knowledge-based economy and enhance the organization’s performance and competitiveness.

Baran, Berube, Roy and Salmon (2000), in their review of rates of returns for employer-sponsored learning, found that returns for employees ranged from 20-50% to as high as 300 percent for formal training. They also found that wage premiums for employees who had participated in formal training with their current employer were approximately 10%. Baran, et al. posited that while informal training is an important means for employees to acquire job-related skills, “where estimates are available, evidence suggests that returns to informal training tend to be small and often insignificant” (p. 5).

A Statistics Canada (1998) survey reported that employee training is prevalent in establishments that seek “greater functional flexibility, innovate new products or services, and organize work in new ways that emphasize problem-solving and decision-making”, characteristics of the knowledge-based economy (p. 40). This survey also found that establishments that explored new ways of producing, marketing and selling products were much more likely to train their employees while companies focused on cost-reduction were less likely to offer employee training. Corporate training rates were also found to be higher for companies that had sources of local, national and international competition.

To meet the demands of global competition and new technologies, organizations and individuals must learn continuously and collectively. Workplace learning is key in meeting those demands and to success! As noted, investments in workplace learning have also been linked to organizational and employee benefits such as increased profits and income per employee. While formal, informal and incidental learning each have their place in preparing organizations and employees to meet the hastened pace of workplace learning demands (Bassi, Cheney & Lewis, 1998; Kanter, 1994), formal training has continued to be, by far, the most predominant, global form of instruction, as evidenced in the Canadian, U.S. and OECD statistical data. While other forms of workplace learning may continue to increase, formal classroom instruction will remain important (Kanter, 1994; Farrell, 2000). Formal training is “a strategic investment, not just a cost to be budgeted” (Bassi, Benson & Cheney, 1996, p. 28). In fact, the Canadian government as part of its innovation strategy is calling upon businesses to increase their investments in employee training by one third within the next five years (HRDC, 2002).

### **The Transfer of Learning**

On the basis of the foregoing discussions, it would appear that an economy’s and an organization’s success are indeed dependent upon their capacity to “effectively use and maintain the skills of [their] workforce” (Bloom, Burrows, Lafleur and Squires, 1997, p. 2). Employees, in turn, must continuously learn new knowledge, skills and attitudes to succeed in the workplace. In addressing the notion of a career-resilient workforce, Waterman, Waterman and Collard (1994) posited that employees must be “dedicated to the idea of continuous learning but also stand ready to reinforce themselves to keep pace with change; take responsibility for their own career management; and, last but not least, be committed to the company’s success. ... It means having the willingness and ability to respond quickly and flexibly to changing business needs”

(pp. 89-90).

The ability of employees to learn new knowledge, skills and attitudes, and to apply those learning efforts to enhance their overall performance, are essential to their own and the organization's competitive advantage. On the basis of the adult education and training statistics, formal training is the most predominant global means of attempting to ensure that employees are prepared to meet the continuous and collective learning demands. According to Broad and Newstrom (1992) however, "most of [the] investment in organizational training and development is wasted because most of the knowledge and skills gained in training (well over 80% by some estimates) are not fully applied by those employees on the job" (p. i). In fact, in a recent Statistics Canada (2001) survey, 54.8% of all course and 45.5% of all program participants perceived that the knowledge or skills which they acquired through training were applied in their work efforts to a great extent. For half of the courses taken for personal reasons, the skills or knowledge acquired was regarded as greatly or somewhat useful at work. Of the participants who participated in a program, the acquired knowledge or skills were applied somewhat (28.5%), applied very little (10%) or not at all (15.8%).

Broad and Newstrom (1992) suggested that the knowledge and skills gained in training activities are not fully applied on the job due to a lack of transfer of the employees' learning. The transfer of learning may, therefore, be a key factor in the degree of success that employees and organizations achieve in their workplace learning efforts, and in augmenting the organizations' return on training investments. Gaining a better understanding of how the transfer of learning can be enhanced, may reap many rewards for employees and organizations, including economic and personal well being, and enhanced competitiveness.

### Definition of Terms

The transfer of learning has been defined in various ways. While a more in depth discussion of this concept and its complexities will be provided in Chapter 2, a brief definition of terms will be discussed here. Broad (1997) defined transfer as the “effective and continuing application by learners - to their performance of jobs or other individual, organizational, or community responsibilities - of knowledge and skills gained in learning activities” (p. 2). Perkins and Salomon (1988) described transfer as learning that “goes beyond ordinary learning in that the skill or knowledge in question has to travel to a new context” (p. 22), while Annett and Sparrow (1985) defined it as the “term used to describe the benefit obtained from having had previous training or experience in acquiring a new skill or in adapting an old skill to a new situation” (p. 116). Finally, Taylor (1997) defined transfer “as the effective application by trainees to their jobs of the knowledge and skills gained as a result of attending an education program” (p. 1).

For the purpose of this study, transfer of learning was defined as the knowledge, skills or attitudes that an individual gains from a training program that are effectively applied in their workplace efforts. This application results in the employees’ enhanced job performance. Interestingly, the OECD (1998) defined human capital along similar lines as the transfer of learning. Human capital was defined as the “knowledge, skills, competencies and other attributes embodied in individuals that are relevant to economic activity. ... Human capital thus constitutes an intangible asset with the capacity to enhance or support productivity, innovation, and employability” (p. 9), emphasizing the importance of the transfer of learning to economic, social and personal well being.

Training, on the other hand, has also been defined in various ways. Training has been

defined as “the systematic development of the attitudes, knowledge and skill patterns of an individual in order that he/she may perform a specific task at a particular level of competence” (Statistics Canada, 2001, p. 61). It has also been defined as “a series of behavioural, affective and cognitive events embedded in a dynamic work setting ... to produce learning outcomes of benefit to individuals, groups, and organizations” (Salas, Cannon-Bowers and Kozlowski, 1997, p. 361), and “the systematic acquisition of skills, rules, concepts, or attitudes that result in improved performance in another environment” (Goldstein, 1993, p. 3). Finally, training has been defined as “a planned learning experience designed to bring about permanent change in an individual’s knowledge, attitudes and skills” (Noe, 1986, p. 736). For the purpose of this study, a training program was defined as a planned learning experience or formal training activity that affects change in an individual’s knowledge, skills or attitudes.

As mentioned, workplace learning was defined as “the ongoing formal and informal acquisition, both on and off the job, of individual, team, and organizational skills, knowledge and abilities. It includes a mindset that views every experience as potential learning” (Marsick & Watkins, 1992, p. 11).

Discourse is a term that is frequently used but it connotes different meanings to different people. For purposes of this study, discourse was defined as a dialogue through which individuals assess reasons “presented in support of competing interpretations, by critically examining evidence, arguments, and alternative points of view. ... Learning is a social process, ... we learn together by analyzing the related experiences of others, ... [with] discourse central to making meaning” (Mezirow, 1997a, pp. 6-10).

Finally, the Training Program’s Design and Development Features section is discussed in terms of the “before”, “during” and “after” training stages. These three terms are commonly used

in the transfer research to denote the design and development features identified as facilitating the transfer of learning prior to, during and following a training program.

### **Orientation to the Research Problem**

A considerable body of research exists concerning how the transfer of learning can be rendered more effective. This research suggests that the training program's design and development, the organizational climate, and the individual learner's characteristics are the three primary sources that influence, positively or negatively, the transfer of learning (Ford and Quinones, 1992; Parry, 1990a). In a review and critical analysis of the transfer research however, Ford and Weissbein (1997) noted that the transfer of learning studies examined the three transfer sources in isolation from each other. Not one of the studies attempted to understand the interaction between the sources. Ford and Weissbein called for future research to focus on how the three transfer sources interact to affect learning and transfer - "a push for more research examining the person within the situation" is required (pp. 37-39).

Further, the majority of the transfer studies have been conducted by cognitive psychologists who have "tended to focus on more basic psychological principles underlying learning and skill acquisition. ... Human factors psychologists [who] have tended to focus on the design of training technology ... [and the] industrial-organizational psychologists [who] have focused on individual differences and organizational factors associated with both training and transfer performance" (Quinones & Ehrenstein, 1997, p. 3). Quinones and Ehrenstein (1997), in keeping with Ford and Weissbein's plea, noted the importance of bringing the separate research pieces together - into a "systems perspective" (pp. 4-5). The transfer literature, for the most part, is siloed in its approach with no real sense of the relationship between the three transfer sources, the relative importance of the three sources, nor of employees' experiences with transfer.

As well, much of the transfer research has been quantitative in nature, employing experimental and quasi-experimental approaches such as pre and post-test scores, self-reports or control groups. Baldwin and Magjuka (1997) suggested that the training literature would benefit enormously from more qualitative data, such as observations, open-ended interviews, and even participant observation. They suggested that qualitative research would be particularly useful in “discovering how informal networks form and modify, and reinforce or counteract the influence of different training elements” (p. 123).

The transfer research has also focused on specific job skills such as computer competencies and time management. The “research emphasizes instrumental or response learning under conditions of stable task environments where cause and effect relationships are relatively clear and desired outcomes known” (York, O’Neil, Marsick, Lamm, Kolodny & Nilson, 1998, p. 61). The knowledge based economy however, is demanding different competencies. Competencies such as industry or corporate awareness, leadership skills, communications and interpersonal-relationship skills, problem-solving skills, systems thinking or the ability to realize the impacts of interventions on the organization, and knowledge of how to improve human performance are being demanded (Bassi, Benson & Cheney, 1996). Such competencies require that learners adapt their learning, to meet their workplace demands (Ford & Weissbein, 1997). The transfer literature did not address the issue of adaptability.

From an adult education perspective, transfer is “a key concept in adult learning theory because most education and training aspires to transfer” (Taylor, 1997, p. 2). However, in reviewing the adult education literature, the transfer of learning subject matter is rarely raised and when it is, its importance is merely noted. It is almost as though there is an expectation or assumption that an adult education activity will result in the learners applying what was learned,

either in their workplace or civic life. Ottoson (1995a) posited, and I concur, that “application needs to be a focus, not an assumption; it needs to be made salient, not subsumed; it needs to be at the forefront of adult education, not an afterthought” (p. 27).

Both the transfer of learning and adult education literatures begged the questions, what are employees’ perceptions of and lived experiences with the transfer of learning, and how do they learn and transfer the knowledge, skills and attitudes presented in training programs to their workplace activities?

### **The Purpose of the Research**

The purpose of this research was to describe federal government administrative, professional and managerial employees’ perceptions of and experiences with the transfer of learning. This research sought to address the “what”, “how”, “when” and “why” questions of that transfer, as they related to training programs that required the learners to adapt their learning to meet their workplace demands, and to understand the interplay between the training program, organizational climate and individual learner’s characteristics. The overarching research question which guided this study was what were the employees’ lived experiences with the transfer of learning? The subquestions were how did these employees experience transfer, when did transfer enter their learning experience and why did they believe that transfer occurred?

### **The Context of the Three Adult Learning Theories**

Adult learning theories which typically address the learner, the context and the learning process (Merriam & Caffarella, 1999), were well positioned to address the arguments put forward by Ford and Weissbein (1997), Quinones and Ehrenstein (1997) and Ottoson (1995a). It was believed that by situating transfer within adult learning theories that an understanding of the interaction between the training program’s design and development, organizational climate and

individual learner's characteristics would be gained. Further, by seeking to understand the adult learners' lived experiences with transfer, it was believed that a better appreciation of transfer as "a key concept in adult learning theory" (Taylor, 1997, p.2) might be achieved and thereby, better position the concept at "the forefront of adult education" (Ottoson, 1995a, p. 27). In addition, as Quinones and Ehrenstein (1997) postulated "different perspectives on the same problem contribute positively to scientific discovery" (p. 3). For every discipline "asks different questions on the same subject matter, giving rise to different answers. ... Hence, the bodies of knowledge we inherit from the behavioral sciences are, taken separately, only imperfectly applicable to practical problems, problems which arise in the whole web of the original complexity" (Schwab, 1978, pp. 330-331). By situating transfer within the adult learning theories, it was believed that a different and valuable perspective on the transfer subject matter would be gained. A perspective which might illuminate the interrelationships between the learner, context and learning process, and integrate the quantitative research findings to date into a more coherent body of knowledge.

On the basis of the transfer research findings, three adult learning theories, which will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 2, that had particular relevance to transfer and workplace learning were self-directed learning, situated cognition and transformational learning. Self-directed learning (SDL), with its humanistic and constructivist underpinnings (Merriam & Caffarella, 1999), acknowledges the importance of the individual learners' characteristics - their autonomy, motivation, attitudes and experience. SDL also acknowledges the learner-centered training program design and development features (Candy, 1991; Hammond & Collins, 1991), many of which were cited in the transfer research. Further, SDL recognizes the importance of the socio-cultural or organizational context to learning.

Situated cognition is an evolving learning theory with application to children, youth and

adults. Situated cognition focuses on the socio-cultural nature of learning. A number of the adult learning theories focus on the importance of experience or the learners' characteristics for example, but do not place much emphasis on the context in which the learning takes place. In situated cognition, learning can not be separated from the context in which it takes place. The physical and social experience, the learning situations and the tools used in the learning experience are integral to the learning experience (Merriam & Caffarella, 1999). This theory, therefore, seeks to understand the "relations between persons acting, the social world, and activity" (Kirshner & Whitson, 1997, p. 3). Situated cognition, with its social learning and constructivist underpinnings (Merriam & Caffarella, 1999), was of relevance to this research as it addresses the learners within their organizational contexts, placing particular emphasis on the learners and their interaction within their community of practice. Mentoring and coaching activities, and the organizational learning climate are important elements of situated cognition, similar to the transfer of learning research findings regarding the organizational climate, as will also be shown in Chapter two.

Finally, transformational learning, with its constructivist assumptions (Merriam & Caffarella, 1999), focuses on the learners' underlying cognitive processes, learner-centered design and development features (Mezirow, 1991), and the learning context. The learners' mental construction of their experiences, their inner meaning and their ability to critically reflect on their experiences (Merriam & Caffarella, 1999), affect changes in their "performance, achievement and productivity" (Mezirow, 1985, p. 148). The learners' ability to dialogue with others in order to make sense of their world, and their ability to take action are important elements of transformational learning and the transfer experience. These three adult learning

theories and the transfer of learning literature provided the lenses through which this research was framed.

### **Predispositions and Assumptions**

Ottoson (1997) stated that “qualitative studies, grounded in participant experiences, are needed to identify the universe of influences on application” (p. 105). Baldwin and Magjuka (1997) echoed these sentiments and argued that “it is incumbent on training researchers to gather more information from the perspective of the trainee, ... the training literature would benefit enormously from more qualitative data” (pp. 122-123).

#### *Predispositions*

On the basis of these statements and the purpose of this study, a qualitative method - a hermeneutic phenomenological approach - was employed. Phenomenology is concerned with the study of the lifeworld and “aims at gaining a deeper understanding of the nature of the meaning of our everyday experiences. ... It is a systematic attempt to uncover and describe the structures, the internal meaning structures, of lived experience” (van Manen, 1997, pp. 9-10).

Phenomenology assumes that the deep, lived meanings that events have for individuals, guide their actions and interactions (Marshall & Rossman, 1999). Phenomenology also rests on the assumption that there is a structure and essence to shared experiences that can be narrated (Creswell, 1998; Marshall & Rossman, 1999).

The goal of hermeneutic phenomenology is to describe the meaning of a concept or phenomenon that several individuals share (Marshall & Rossman, 1999). Hermeneutics, or “the study of the interpretation of texts” (Kvale, 1996, p. 46), helped in explaining and interpreting the dialogue produced in the interviews. As Kvale (1996) noted, hermeneutics “by elucidating the dialogue producing the interview texts to be interpreted, and then by clarifying the subsequent

process of interpreting the interview texts produced ... was doubly relevant to [the] interview research” (p. 46).

According to van Manen (1997), “hermeneutic phenomenological research may be seen as a dynamic interplay among six research activities” (p. 30). These research activities include the researcher’s interest in the phenomenon, investigation of the participants’ lived experience, reflection on themes which characterize the phenomenon, description of the phenomenon in written form, maintenance of a strong and oriented relation to the phenomenon, and balancing of the research context by considering the parts and the whole.

In terms of the first research activity, my own interest in the phenomenon, I often questioned how to best prepare the people that I manage, as well as myself, to meet the fast-paced, constant workplace challenges. Like so many other organizations, my workplace has undergone substantial changes over the past few years. At the organizational level, there were substantial cuts in staff and management, a flattened reporting structure, increased demands on the remaining staff, a more client focused orientation and team-based work units. Of all of the organizational changes, the most prominent and challenging in my mind was the transition to teams as the organizational work unit. All employees were provided with extensive formal team training. Much to my amazement however, the team training was riddled with cynicism, outright lament for the good old days or embraced with best efforts to apply the training to meet the job requirements. Some employees succeeded in applying some of the team training back to their jobs and some of the teams were regarded as being fairly effective and efficient. Other individuals applied very little of the training back to the workplace and their teams were seen as highly dysfunctional. With all of the time, money and emotion expended on the training, I questioned what was the root of the problem? Why were so many employees not successful in

transferring the team training back to the workplace? The transfer of learning became a subject matter that piqued my interest!

### *Assumptions*

At the outset of this study, it was acknowledged that the researcher as the research instrument was influential in the research process from the selection of the topic and research method, to the dynamics of the interview and the interpretation of the findings. The transfer of learning is clearly a subject matter that is of great interest to me both as an employee and as a manager. I believe that transfer is fundamental to individual and organizational performance, and workplace successes. Today's workplaces require that a learner's learning be applied to the job demands for purposes of enhancing the employees' performance and the organizations' competitiveness. In many respects, transfer gets to the bottom of who we are as individuals, who we seek to become and the world that we would like to create both for ourselves and others. An individual's ability to apply new knowledge, skills or attitudes from one context to another is, in my opinion, fundamental to personal, social and economic well-being. As Caffarella (1994) posited "assisting people to make changes is what transfer is all about - changes in themselves, other people, practices, organizations, and/or society" (p. 108).

My selection of a hermeneutic phenomenological approach was also very much premised on my own personal desire to better understand employees', including my own, lived experiences with the transfer of learning and to shed some light on the complexity of the transfer experience - from the employees' perspectives. I wanted to hear their voices and to let them resonate in the transfer and adult learning literatures.

I have been an employee in the federal government department, in which the research participants worked, for eleven years. During those years, I have held various positions. Among

those positions were a senior advisor on industry sector issues, manager of a departmental human resources program, and currently, a senior advisor for organizational development. In my current position, I provide advice to senior officials on human resource and organizational development issues.

Throughout my years of work with this department, I came to know three of the participants somewhat through my work activities, although I did not know them personally. As a result of my working in the organization, I was not an “arm’s length” interviewer. I was involved as both the researcher and a participant. The participants and I all shared a history with the organization. I could relate to their transfer experiences and perceptions, as I too had participated in similar in-house training programs over the years and understood the organization. I believe that my history with the organization established trust with all of the participants at the outset of the research. I was one of them and like them, sought to better understand our transfer experiences and perhaps, ultimately, enhance the workplace for employees and managers alike. We were all engaged in a conversation “about a theme of mutual interest” (Kvale, 1996, p. 14). In this sense, aside from my own professional interest in the subject matter, we all had a vested personal and corporate interest. I believe that by being a member of the organization, a trusting relationship was established at the outset, and that this relationship facilitated the interview process, enhanced the data collection and interpretation processes, and thus strengthened the quality of the research.

In terms of the dynamics of the research interviews, I was keenly aware throughout all of the interviews of my influence on the setting by my mere presence and the manner in which I probed or directed the conversations (Maxwell, 1996). Further, as the hermeneutic phenomenological research approach is concerned with the interpretation of texts, there was a

potential, inherent concern that the interpretation of the data would be made according to my existing theories or preconceptions of the subject matter (Maxwell, 1996). Maxwell (1996) stated however, and I concur, that researchers can address the concerns of reactivity and researcher bias by understanding “how [their] values influence the conduct and conclusions of the study ... [and] how [they] influence what the informant says, and how this affects the validity of the inferences” drawn (p. 91). The goal is not to eliminate the researchers’ influence, “but to understand it and use it productively” (p. 91). These issues will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 3.

### **Significance of the Study**

At the outset of the research, I hoped that the study’s findings would permit a more comprehensive understanding of the complexities of the transfer experience and the interaction between the training program, organizational climate and individual learners’ characteristics. I also hoped that the study would advance our understanding of the transfer of learning from the perspective of employees who lived the transfer experience, permitting a better appreciation of the what, how, when and why of employees’ application efforts. This appreciation would assist adult educators in better understanding, developing and delivering more effective training programs. Training programs that would be more conducive to the learners’ transfer. The findings were, therefore, thought to be of relevance to adult education practices, policies, and program design. I also believed that by placing transfer at the forefront of adult education (Ottoson, 1995a), that adult educators might better address the current trends in adult education which portray the adult learners as working beings (Brookfield, 2002; Solar, 1998; Usher, Bryant & Johnston, 1997), whose performance efforts depend on their transfer abilities.

Finally, I hoped that the study’s findings would contribute to employees and

organizations alike in better understanding the transfer of learning, and to organizations in creating work environments where the transfer of learning would be facilitated. I hoped that the research would contribute to employees, and human resources and management officials alike in facilitating and achieving the desired workplace outcomes. Such workplace successes might contribute to the continuous competitiveness of employees and organizations and, in turn, the well being of the inhabitants and economies of the global village.

### **Organization of the Remaining Chapters**

The details of the research are presented in the five remaining chapters. Chapter two discusses the conceptual basis for this research, both the transfer of learning literature and the three adult learning theories. Chapter three describes the hermeneutic phenomenological research approach, the research design and the study's trustworthiness. Chapter four explores and describes the findings. Chapter five provides an interpretation of the data, along with a discussion of the relevant literature. Finally, Chapter six summarizes and discusses the findings, the research's contribution to scholarly knowledge and implications for practice, and identifies areas requiring further study.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **Conceptual Context of the Study**

This chapter presents the conceptual context of the study. It provides a brief discussion of the three key transfer indicators, the different types of transfer - positive, far, vertical and high road, and some of the measurement issues and questions which must be addressed when assessing transfer. It also provides a detailed review of the three primary transfer sources - the training program's design and development features, organizational climate characteristics and the individuals' characteristics, and an extensive discussion of the three adult learning theories which framed this research - self directed, situated cognition and transformational learning. A summary of the discussions then follows.

#### **The Different Types of Transfer**

Transfer involves three key indicators. These indicators are generalization, maintenance and adaptability (Ford & Weissbein, 1997). Generalization refers to the application of the knowledge or skills learned in a training program, in contexts that differ from the training context (Laker, 1990). Generalization requires that the trainee exhibit the trained behaviors in response to different settings, people and situations (Ford & Weissbein, 1997).

Maintenance focuses on "the changes that occur in the form or level of knowledge, skills, or behaviors exhibited in the transfer setting as a function of time elapsed from the completion of the training program" (Ford & Weissbein, 1997, p. 34). Training maintenance is, therefore, the continued application of the knowledge, skills and behaviors on the job, over time (Laker, 1990). Adaptability or "the extent to which the trainee can adapt to novel or changing situational demands" was suggested as another key indicator by Ford and Weissbein (1997, p. 34). Adaptability relates to the employees' ability to adjust the knowledge and skills learned in the

training program, including generating new approaches and strategies, in the face of novel work situations. In assessing whether transfer happened the “learned behaviors must be generalized to the job context and maintained over a period of time on the job” (Baldwin & Ford, 1988, p. 63).

A number of different types of transfer have also been theorized in the literature. Yorks, et al. (1998) stated that these “theoretical formulations of kinds of transfer reveal the complexity of the concept” (p. 61). In addition to generalization, maintenance and adaptability, transfer has been identified as positive and negative. Positive transfer refers to the flexible use or application of the knowledge and skills acquired in a training program in an employee’s work activities. Negative transfer refers to learning that changes an employee’s subsequent job performance for the worse (Butterfield & Nelson, 1989). Transfer has also been described as near and far. Near transfer refers to the extent to which employees apply what they learned in a training program to situations that mirror or closely resemble the ones in which they were trained. Far transfer, on the other hand, refers to the extent to which trainees apply what they learned in a training program to novel work situations (Laker, 1990).

The notion of lateral and vertical transfer has also been raised. Lateral transfer refers to transfer that spreads over a broad set of situations at roughly the same level of complexity, such as understanding differences in programming languages (Singley & Anderson, 1989). Vertical transfer, on the other hand, involves transfer between lower and higher level skills that exist in parts and a whole, in a prerequisite relationship with one another such as subordinate learning sets in a hierarchy of sets. Milheim (1994), on the other hand, described horizontal transfer as learning which can be moved almost directly from a training classroom to the work site and vertical transfer as transfer that requires an employee to significantly adapt a new skill to fit the conditions of the workplace. These two definitions were similar to Singley and Anderson’s

lateral and vertical transfer definitions.

Transfer has also been cast as low and high road. Low road transfer depends upon the extensive, varied practice of the knowledge, skills and attitudes in a training program, and the automatic triggering of this well-learned behavior in a new context (Salomon and Perkins, 1989). In cases of low road transfer, “well practiced skills or knowledge and superficial perceptual similarity [are required to] activate the skills or knowledge” in a new setting (Perkins & Salomon, 1988, p. 27). Low road transfer occurs almost automatically so long as the skills and behavior learned in one context can be transferred almost directly to another context, requiring little modification (Yorks, et al., 1998).

High road transfer, on the other hand, is dependent upon the mindful abstractions of the knowledge or skill from one context to application in a new context. High road transfer requires that the learner engage in reflective thought in order to abstract the knowledge and skills from one context and see the connections between that knowledge or skill in other contexts (Perkins & Salomon, 1988). High road transfer requires that the learner be able to bridge the learning between novel contexts and “requires the effort of deliberate abstraction and connection making and the ingenuity to make the abstractions and discover the connections” (Perkins & Salomon, 1988, p. 27).

High road transfer consists of forward and backward reaching transfer. Forward reaching transfer refers to situations in which the individual mindfully abstracts information in anticipation of its later application. Backward reaching transfer refers to situations in which the individual, when facing a new situation, deliberately searches for previously acquired knowledge that is relevant to the situation at hand (Salomon & Perkins, 1989).

## Measuring the Transfer of Learning

Viewed from a program evaluation perspective, the transfer of learning refers to “the extent to which participants change their on-the-job behaviors because of training” (Kirkpatrick, 1996, p. 56). Kirkpatrick’s framework for conceptualising and evaluating intended training program outcomes is probably the most renowned transfer measurement model. Kirkpatrick outlined four levels of evaluation. These levels include reaction, learning, behavior and results. *Reaction* refers to how well trainees liked a particular training program. The reaction level generally seeks to measure trainees’ feelings about the training program, including the topic, speaker, schedule and general program design elements. *Learning* refers to the amount of individual learning that actually took place. This level seeks to measure the trainee’s level of knowledge acquired, the skills improved or the attitudes changed due to the training activity. *Behavior* relates to the extent to which the trainees changed their on-the-job behavior due to the training activity. This level is often referred to as the transfer of learning and it seeks to measure the extent of the changed behavior on-the-job. The *results* level refers to the final results that occur in the organization due to employees’ training efforts. These results are assessed by, for example, increased company sales, higher productivity rates, improved product quality, higher company profits and reduced costs. All four program evaluation levels assist in determining whether the training program should continue and how to improve future training programs; providing employees with feedback on their performance; and providing organizations with a sense of the training program’s overall effectiveness in enhancing organizational performance.

Guskey (2000) similarly, outlined five levels for conceptualizing intended program outcomes. In assessing level 1 of a program, the participants’ reactions, Guskey posited that the evaluator must seek to understand if the learning experience was worthwhile. Level one

assessments include questions of content, process and context. Level two evaluations, the participants' learning, seek to understand whether the participants' learning goals were met. The learners' cognitive, psychomotor and affective goals are assessed at this level. Level three evaluations, organizations' support, solicit information on the organizations' conduciveness to the learners' transfer efforts. Questions such as organizational policies, resource availability, the organization's openness to experimentation, the managers' support and provision of time are addressed. Level four, participants' use of new knowledge and skills, seeks to determine if and how new practices were implemented by the participants, as a result of the training program. The participants' level of use of the newly acquired behaviors, the concerns that they experience as they undergo the process of change, and improvements in their practices are assessed at this level. Finally, level five evaluations, student learning outcomes, seek to understand the course's impact on the students, in order to change professional practices and policies. The changes are intended to improve student learning outcomes in subsequent training programs.

Kirkpatrick's level three type evaluations typically require appraisals of the employees' on-the-job performance on a before and after training basis, and conducting post-training appraisals three or more months after the training program. These appraisals would be conducted by the trainees themselves and their supervisors, subordinates and peers to assess the trainees' changes in behavior. Level three type evaluations would also include conducting surveys and focus groups, and employing control groups (Guskey, 2000; Kirkpatrick, 1987).

Guskey (2000), in addressing his level four type evaluations, suggested that two questions in particular, must be addressed: 1) did the participants incorporate the new knowledge and skills into their work practices and 2) did the learning translate into any change in the employees' professional behaviors or activities? Guskey further suggested that there are five

levels of training program use which must be considered in level four type evaluations. These five levels are similar to the various types of transfer and include the: 1) mechanical level, or near transfer for example, whereby the individual would implement new ideas in a mechanistic, uncoordinated way; 2) routine level, or lateral, in which the individual has established regular patterns of the knowledge and skill use but makes few changes to them; 3) refined level, or vertical, in which the learner assesses the impact of the learning and makes changes to improve his or her effectiveness; 4) integration level, or far, in which the learner makes deliberate efforts to coordinate their application efforts with others who are also engaged in the use of the learned knowledge and skills and 5) renewal level, or high road, where the individual actively seeks more effective alternatives to their established use patterns.

To assess if transfer has actually occurred, the program evaluation must first determine what anticipated changes or outcomes are expected to occur as a result of the training program, where or in what settings the learners are expected to apply the newly acquired knowledge, skills and attitudes, and when the transfer outcomes are to be measured (Ford, 1994; Guskey, 2000; Laker, 1990). The measurement of “transfer outcomes depends on how long knowledge, skills and attitudes must be retained in order to conclude that successful transfer has occurred” (Ford, 1994, p. 30).

In measuring transfer, it is also important to distinguish whether the observed employee practices, subsequent to transfer, are truly different than the employees’ previous practices, and to determine whether the observed differences are due to the training activities or other factors. “Determining differences in practice is [a] crucial aspect of evaluation at this level” (Guskey, 2000, pp. 186-187). Laker (1990) suggested that transfer is easier to measure if what is being transferred is a behavior, the behavior is well defined and easily observable, and the behavior is

associated with a specific setting, person and time.

Bassi, Benson and Cheney (1996) suggested that the measurement of performance should be premised on the degree to which the new skills transfer to the workforce, the individual and group performance improves, and the training contributes to specific business goals. Bassi, Benson and Cheney added that the quantification and qualification of the client relationships, and the number of performance contracts agreed to and met within a year should also form the basis of performance measurement. Broad (1997) noted that the measurement of the degree of transfer and the return on investment may be best determined by “performance in the workplace [being] recognized as the indicator of the transfer of newly learned skills and knowledge to full application on the job” (p. ix).

Over the years, a fifth level of program evaluation has been added to Kirkpatrick’s established program evaluation model. The fifth level refers to the return on investment (ROI) and typically compares the training monetary benefits with the training costs (Phillips, February, 1996). It also typically includes customer input and expert estimation (Phillips, March, 1996), and converts the data to monetary value (Phillips, April, 1996). The ROI is of increasing importance to organizations as human resources development budgets continue to grow, and as a more bottom line approach to training initiatives and accountability for all functions in an organization assume greater importance (Phillips & Phillips, 2000).

On the basis of these discussions, the transfer of learning which may initially seem to be fairly straight forward, is a fairly complex concept. The transfer of learning is dependent upon the conditions of transfer for example, generalization, maintenance and adaptability, and an understanding of the different types of transfer. The measurement of transfer must take into account not only the learners’ behavioral changes but also what type of transfer is to be assessed.

In measuring transfer for communications or leadership type training however, it may be difficult to assess if the observed differences are due to the training activity only as the learner, in conjunction with their training experiences, may read widely or accept a role in the community that augments their transfer efforts in their work activities. A training program may also have added benefits, such as enhancing employees' self confidence for example, but may not necessarily be an identified outcome. These factors taken together, shed some light on the reason for the low transfer rates, up to 80% in some cases, cited by Broad and Newstrom (1992). The next section of the study will provide a review of the transfer literature and illuminate some of the training program's design and development features, organizational climate characteristics and individual learner's characteristics that have been found to enhance the transfer of learning.

### **The Transfer of Learning Research Review**

A fairly extensive body of research exists concerning how the transfer of learning can be rendered more effective. This research suggests that the training programs' design and development, the organizational climate, and the individual's characteristics are the three primary sources that influence, positively or negatively, the transfer of learning (Ford & Quinones, 1992; Parry, 1990a). Figure 1 provides a graphical depiction of these three sources. This section of the study reviews recent transfer of learning studies, for each of the three primary transfer sources, and discusses the variables that have been identified as facilitating transfer.

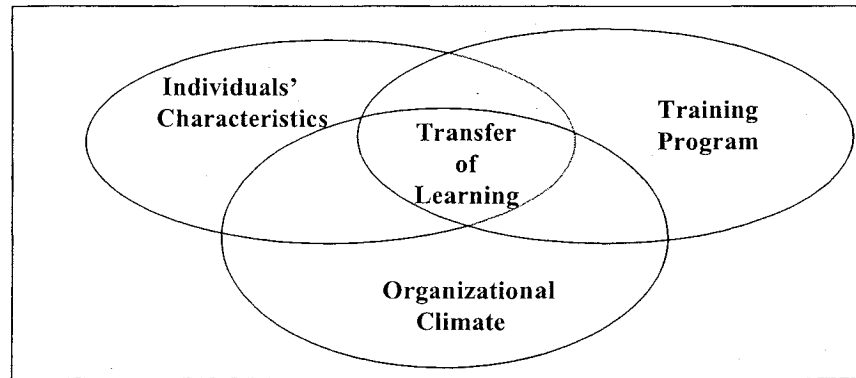


Figure1: The transfer of learning - The three primary transfer sources.

### *Training Program's Design and Development Features*

Milheim (1994), in reviewing the training design and development literature, noted that “the transfer of newly learned skills from a training situation to actual on the job performance is one of the most important aspects of training design and development, since this process is the ultimate goal of nearly any training session” (p. 95). Features of the training program’s design and development that have been identified as facilitating the transfer of learning are numerous and can be categorized under the “before, during and after” stages of training.

#### *The before training stage.*

Features of the “before” training stage that have been identified as facilitating transfer include involving trainers, employees, and human resources and middle management officials in the development of the training program’s objectives and goals. They also include conducting organizational and employee needs, and work environment assessments; assessing the trainees’ general attitudes, knowledge, motivation and training expectations prior to the trainees entering the program; and gaining upper management’s support for the program. Finally, they include learner centered or problem driven training; adapting the training methods to meet the different trainees’ aptitudes and prior knowledge; providing the trainees with pre-training reading

material; and developing appropriate program content, media, materials and program evaluation criteria (Broad & Newstrom, 1992; Fox, 1994; Garavaglia, 1993; Kemerer, 1991; Milheim, 1994; Nolan, 1994; Parry, 1990b; Tannenbaum & Yukl, 1992).

*The during training stage.*

According to Broad and Newstrom (1992), Fox (1994), Garavaglia (1993), and Tannenbaum and Yukl (1992), there are various training approaches, during the delivery of the training program, that enhance the likelihood of transfer occurring. These approaches include: (a) ensuring that the various transfer contexts and different approaches to those contexts are discussed and demonstrated, (b) teaching general principles and providing analogies concerning how the principles can be applied in various situations, (c) providing computer simulations of real world applications and examples of behavior modelling, (d) discussing the relevant concepts to ensure that a stable frame of reference, on which the trainee can anchor the new learning, is provided, (e) including practice techniques, role playing, group discussions, and guided practicums of tasks or problems that closely match the job tasks and situations, (f) providing trainees with accurate, timely and constructive feedback, and (g) encouraging the trainees to reflect on the training by asking them to write down the benefits of the training, changes that they anticipate making as a result of the training and how they intend to transfer the training back to their work environment.

Tannenbaum and Yukl (1992) further noted the importance of providing trainees with various opportunities to practice their new behaviors, recall information from memory, and restate or apply principles when undertaking a task. They further suggested commencing the training program with simple behaviors that can be mastered easily and progress to the more complex behaviors as the trainees become more confident.

Baldwin (1992), in examining behavior modelling, specifically the effect of positive and negative modelling strategies on the transfer of assertive communication skills, found that business student trainees who were exposed to both modelling strategies scored higher on a behavior generalization measure, administered one month after the training. Trainees however, who received only the positive model training scored higher on a behavioral reproduction measure, administered the same day of the training. Baldwin suggested that positive and negative model combinations may enhance conceptual understanding and foster a higher degree of mastery, but when reproduction of skills is sought, stimulus similarity and repetition may be in order. He posited that the “utility of different modelling strategies may be partially contingent on observer characteristics” (p. 153) such as attitudes, values and behaviors regarding specific training experiences, and reinforced the notion that the observer characteristics must be considered when delivering a course.

Tziner, Haccoun and Kadish (1991), in seeking to prevent the problem of training effect decay or maintenance of the training, examined means of enhancing the transfer of learning through relapse prevention (RP) training. They found, through the use of questionnaires, that RP training, which sensitized military trainees to possible environmental or situational factors that might inhibit their use of the newly acquired instruction scheduling and training package skills, was associated with higher levels of immediate post-training mastery of the training contents. RP training was also associated with increased levels of acquired knowledge and strategy utilization. Tziner, et al. further found that the supervisors of the RP trainees perceived those employees as actually having transferred the learned skills back to the job. They concluded that “transfer may be more likely when trainees learn a transfer strategy [fitting] to their context” (p. 175) and that a RP strategy may “serve to consolidate learning and to help trainees develop a

personal and integrated point of view on the course content” (p. 175).

Yorks, O’Neil, Marsick, Lamm, Kolodny and Nilson (1998) also studied an intervention in training program design. Their research examined trainees’ learning and transfer gains from an Action Reflection Learning (ARL) program. ARL is an approach that “designs learning around real-world challenges” (p. 60), in this case individual and team competencies. The purpose of the research “was to provide data on the dynamics of the program as an evolving learning community” (p. 62), using field observations and formal interviews. Yorks, et al. found that the participants, managers from an international food company, did experience positive changes in their behaviors. They concluded that the ARL program promoted generalization, and confirmed the importance of senior executive coaching and the incorporation of real workplace issues into the training program design.

Bowne (1999) examined intervention methods in the before, during and after the training program stages. These methods included a set of practice tools such as an impact map which linked the training to job behavior and organizational performance measures, and systems analysis, action planning and supervisory support worksheets. Bowne found that the training enhancing interventions were associated with positive increases in transfer, in a manufacturing environment, and that there was a relationship between the level of supervisory reinforcement of the trained behaviors and reported transfer, as measured by surveys. Bowne noted that it is important for supervisors and trainers to work with the trainees to help trainees understand what they are expected to learn and apply in the workplace. Bowne further noted that supervisors need to provide an encouraging and supportive work environment wherein the newly acquired knowledge, skills and attitudes are accepted.

MacDonald, Gabriel and Cousins (2000) examined the effectiveness of the Certified

Advanced Technology Manager program using Kirkpatrick's four levels of evaluation. Thirty middle managers or professionals in the high technology industry participated in three day training sessions over an eight month period. MacDonald, et al. found that applying the principles of adult learning to a training program, designed specifically for a firm, can facilitate the trainees' acquisition, retention and transfer of their learning. They suggested that transfer is facilitated when a manageable modular structure is employed, the content is relevant and applicable, a comfortable adult learning environment is created, and relevant and useful prereading assignments are provided. MacDonald, Cousins, Bucknell and Nariman (1998) recommended that better use of the participants' knowledge should be made by allowing more time for the sharing of personal experiences.

*The after training stage.*

Features of the "after" program stage that enhance transfer include post-program support strategies such as managers and trainees jointly developing a trainee training plan, and identifying special projects and follow-up assignments. They also include trainees networking with fellow colleagues concerning application opportunities; and managers providing rewards, incentives, positive reinforcement, feedback, and coaching or mentoring to the trainees, upon their return to the workplace, on the application of the new knowledge and skills (Cheek & Campbell, 1994; Garavaglia, 1998; Keiner, 1994). Much of the transfer research that supports the "after" program training stage is included under the organizational climate characteristics research, which follows in the next section of this study.

In summary, designing and developing training programs that facilitate transfer involve a great deal of consideration, especially on the part of the trainer. Each training program stage requires that the trainer be well prepared. This preparation includes for example, becoming

familiar with the organization and the trainees' needs, involving the trainees in various activities, and preparing managers and peers to support the trainees' new behaviors.

Designing and developing a training program involves deliberations about and inclusion of the organization's and employees' needs, the work environment setting, appropriate training approaches and interventions, and follow-up strategies. While the numerous design and development features are associated with positive transfer, there was no indication of which features either in isolation, such as specific intervention methods, or in conjunction with other features, may have a greater impact on the trainees' transfer efforts. Further, attempting to address the identified features in the before program stage may be difficult in today's work environment where training is required yesterday. In the during program stage, with many programs being shortened to a couple of days in length, and in the after program stage with the time demands on employees at all levels, incorporating many of the features in the training program may be difficult, diminishing employees' transfer efforts.

#### *Organizational Climate Characteristics*

The organizational climate characteristics that have been identified as facilitating transfer are also numerous and can be categorized as the: (1) organizational transfer climate, (2) managerial support and (3) trainees' opportunities to perform the trained tasks in the workplace. This section of the study sequentially addresses these three categories.

##### *Organizational transfer climate.*

Smith-Jentsch, Salas and Brannick (2001) examined the combined effects of pilot trainees' characteristics, team leader support and team climate on the trainees' use of behaviors learned in an assertiveness training program, on their post training performance. Smith-Jentsch, et al. found through questionnaires that trainees who had: a) supportive team leaders who

positively reinforced their new behaviors, and b) perceived their team transfer climate as supportive, had higher performance results and increased levels of transfer. Smith-Jentsch, et al. suggested that “leaders should begin to view themselves as trainers in a continuous learning environment and seek out opportunities to publicly reinforce transfer and acceptable behaviors and expectations” (p. 290). They also reported that the trainees who had a stronger predisposition toward the trained skills, tended to view their organizational climate as more supportive.

Goodkind (1997), on the other hand, explored individual and organizational learning by applying a theoretical transfer model to team training. This theoretical model included elements of individual and organizational learning, a transfer of training course, and transfer of learning as an approach to increased organizational ability to compete. Goodkind found, through a case study approach, that the transfer of training course and team training indirectly facilitated the medical laboratory employees’ learning by strengthening the employees’ work relationships and networks. Goodkind suggested that the informal practice of the community facilitated the employees’ learning and concluded that communities of practice are valuable in providing the link between the individuals’ learning, organizational learning and change. Goodkind posited that social learning or the community of practice, was an alternative to traditional, formal learning in organizations.

Richman (1998) sought to investigate, with faculty and staff at a large midwestern university, a process by which post training interventions might lead to better generalization and maintenance of trained skills. Richman, in examining the effectiveness of goal setting and self-management post training interventions, through control groups and questionnaires, found that goal setting training, which provided trainees with transfer cognitive skills and techniques, was

an efficient and cost effective means of improving transfer, particularly when the work environment supported and valued training and development activities. Richman reported that trainee self-efficacy, the transfer of training climate, a continuous learning culture, and the trainees' training performance and motivation were all significant predictors of generalization and maintenance of trained skills, as measured four to six weeks after the training.

Ottoson (1997) explored, through qualitative interviews, the organizational barriers and facilitators to the application of learning following a continuing education program. Her study sought to address whether and how employees in public and private sector health organizations had applied the planning and evaluation transfer model taught during the training program. Ottoson found that multiple factors influenced the transfer of skills. These factors included the training program, limited organizational resources, organizational structure and nature of the participant's job. Ottoson posited that training programs should prepare participants for the transfer of their learning, in addition to understanding the innovation, and suggested that "additional qualitative studies, grounded in participant experiences, are needed to identify the universe of influences on application before quantitative studies pursue the strength of selected influences" (p. 105).

In examining specific organizational climate characteristics that facilitate transfer, Tracey, Tannenbaum and Kavanagh (1995) found, through questionnaires, that a transfer of training climate such as task cues, feedback and rewards, and a continuous learning culture such as social support and continuous innovation, were positively related to the transfer of newly acquired skills, as measured by self-reports. They noted that the social support system, in particular, played an important and positive role in the transfer of newly acquired supervisory skills, such as customer and employee relations, by supermarket managers. Tracey, et al. concluded that

“various training related cues in the work environment can facilitate or hinder the application of newly trained behaviors” (p. 249) and that “a continuous learning culture can influence specific behaviors associated with a particular training program” (p. 250).

Holton, Bates, Seyler and Carvalho (1997), on the other hand, attempted to develop a valid and generalizable transfer climate instrument, and to advance Rouiller and Goldstein’s (1993) work on an organizational transfer climate measure. Holton, et al., through transfer climate survey questionnaires, examined elements of an organizational climate that facilitated transfer. They found that equipment operators in a petrochemical manufacturing facility who had participated in an operator training program, perceived the organizational climate by organizational referents such as the supervisor or peers, rather than psychological cues such as goal or social cues, as posited by Rouiller and Goldstein (1993). Holton, et al. identified the following transfer climate constructs as necessary for incorporation into a transfer climate instrument: (a) supervisor support, (b) opportunity to use the training, (c) peer support, (d) supervisor sanctions such as negative feedback, (e) positive personal outcomes such as career development, (f) negative personal outcomes such as reprimands, and (g) resistance from colleagues.

Rouiller and Goldstein (1993) sought to develop an organizational transfer climate measure to determine if fast food restaurant managers’ behaviors, learned in shift management and customer service managerial training, were actually put into use in the workplace. Through survey questionnaires, they found that situational cues such as goal, social and task, which reminded trainees of their training or provided them with opportunities to use their training in the workplace, facilitated their transfer of training to the job. They also found that individuals who performed “better on the learning measures from training also tend to perform better on the

transfer behavior measure on the job” (p. 386), as measured by learning scores and supervisor’s evaluation scores of the trainee’s performance several weeks after the training. Rouiller and Goldstein posited that the transfer climate may be just as important as the training of the employees.

*Managerial support.*

Meers (1997), through the use of control groups and questionnaires, explored the relationships between a number of variables on employees’ transfer efforts. These variables were employees who had participated in a formal telemarketing training program, supervisors who had taken training in promoting learning on the job, positive supervisory support and the level of the trainees’ self efficacy. The transfer of training was measured by the effectiveness of improvements in telemarketing activities. Meers found that neither the supervisory training and support, nor the employees’ participation in the telemarketing training program were significantly related to transfer, as measured eight weeks after the training. Meers noted that the contextual barriers which included work overload, job mismatches, stress, interpersonal conflict and work group resistance to the new telemarketing practices, diminished the relationship between supervisory support, employee training and transfer. Meers concluded that these organizational factors negatively influenced the employees’ transfer efforts.

Olivero, Bane and Kopelman (1997) studied executive coaching as a transfer of training tool. Their research found that a critical factor influencing the transfer of managerial skills, such as problem solving and public presentations, was the extent to which the managers received one-on-one coaching from an executive. Olivero, et al. also found, through self reports and pre and post test scores, that another critical factor was the opportunity that the managers, in a large health organization, had to practice their newly acquired skills, upon their return to the

workplace. Olivero, et al. noted that the managers actually showed a marked increase in productivity and posited that one-on-one executive coaching “is an important way of ensuring that knowledge acquired during training actually emerges as skills that are applied at work” (p. 467).

Brinkerhoff and Montessano (1995) examined the relationship between management support for the trainee before and after the training on the transfer of skills to the workplace. They found, through self-reports, that managers, team leaders and employees who had participated in behavioral skills training such as managing meetings and negotiation skills, and who had received managerial support through means such as discussions about what the course was about or how the training program content could be applied to their jobs, showed significantly higher training usage. They also found that the managers perceived their work environment as facilitating transfer. These researchers suggested that their “findings provide further evidence that support provided by managers before and after training leads to greater transfer of training. The study recommends building stronger trainer-manager-trainee partnerships in the phases before, during, and after training” (p. 263).

*Trainees' practice opportunities.*

Similar to Olivero, et al.'s (1997) research, Ford and Quinones (1992) found, through questionnaires, that the transfer of technical equipment skills to the job was dependent upon the opportunities that the trainees had to perform the trained tasks upon returning to their workplace. They also found that these opportunities varied according to the work context and individual factors. The work context factor that had the greatest impact on the airmen's work performance opportunities was the supervisor's positive perceptions of the trainees' capability, skills and likeability. The individual factor of self-efficacy, on the other hand, had the greatest impact on

the breadth of experience that the trainees obtained and the type of tasks they performed following the training. Ford and Quinones posited that the individuals who were high in self-efficacy were more “likely to perform more of the tasks they were trained for and to perform the more complex and difficult tasks” (p. 519). Gist (1987) reported similar self-efficacy and performance findings.

In summary, organizational climate characteristics that facilitate transfer can generally be categorized as the organizational transfer climate, managerial support and trainees’ practice opportunities. Within these three broad categories, the supervisor’s feedback, the provision of employee rewards, managerial support for the employees’ training efforts, a continuous learning environment and organizational situational cues such as goal, social and task, which remind trainees of the training, were found to facilitate transfer. Organizational climate characteristics such as the opportunity for the trainees to receive one-on-one executive coaching and to practice their new skills when they return to their workplace were also found to enhance transfer.

### *Individual’s Characteristics*

The individual learner’s characteristics associated with facilitating transfer are numerous and varied. These characteristics can generally be categorized as an individual’s motivation to learn, attitudes and abilities, self-efficacy, and participation in the training and development decisions. The following section sequentially discusses these general categories.

#### *Motivation, attitudes and abilities.*

Smith-Jentsch, Jentsch, Payne and Salas (1996) studied the effects of trainees’ pre-training experiences on learning and retention. They found, through the use of a control group, that pilot trainees who had experienced negative events prior to the pilot accident training

program, were more motivated to do well in the program and consequently, were more likely to learn the content of the program. Smith-Jentsch, et al. suggested that the trainees who did not have negative events prior to the training “might not have believed they had an immediate need for such training” (p. 114). They posited that creating a perceived need for the training in the minds of training program participants would be beneficial to transfer.

Facteau, Dobbins, Russell, Ladd and Kudisch (1995), on the other hand, examined the effects of state government managers’ needs and attitudes about the training, the organization and the job, on their pre-training motivation and perceived transfer of training skills. Facteau et al. found, through a survey questionnaire, that a training program’s reputation and the participant’s intrinsic motivation were positively related to pre-training motivation, while the participant’s obligation to attend the training was found to be negatively related to pre-training motivation. Further, individuals who had a higher commitment to the organization’s values and goals were found to have higher levels of pre-training motivation and perceptions of transfer.

Tesluk, Farr, Mathieu and Vance (1995) examined variables at the individual, unit and organizational levels to determine the variables’ influence on the generalization of problem solving and decision making knowledge and skills, learned by state agency transportation employees, to the job. They found, through questionnaires, that at the individual level the number of training opportunities, and the individuals’ organizational commitment and belief in organizational improvement were all related to generalization of training. At the unit and organizational levels, the climate for the participant’s decision making was related to the generalization of training.

Clark, Dobbins and Ladd (1993), on the other hand, examined the importance of trainees’, from public and private sector organizations, job and career utility perceptions to

transfer. They found, through questionnaires, that “perceived job and career utility were significant predictors of the trainees’ training motivation and decision to participate in the training” (p. 302). Clark, et al. also found that the supervisors’ credibility affected the trainees’ perceptions of the training in terms of its job and career utility, while the transfer climate affected the trainees’ perceived job utility and, in turn, their motivation. Clark, et al. suggested that trainees must be convinced that the training will enhance their job performance, that they be involved in the decision to participate and that they believe that supervisors will support their transfer of training efforts.

Kozlowski, Gully, Brown, Salas, Smith and Nason (2001) examined the effects of mastery and performance training goals, and mastery learning and performance goal orientation traits on multidimensional outcomes of training such as declarative knowledge, knowledge structure coherence, training performance and self efficacy. Kozlowski, et al., in studying undergraduate student trainees who had participated in a computer simulation training program, found through pre and post test scores, that academic achievement, as an indicator of ability, made a significant contribution to declarative knowledge. The trainees’ learning orientation, on the other hand, had a significant relationship with self efficacy. Mastery training goals had a significant positive effect on: a) knowledge structure coherence, in combination with declarative knowledge, and b) self efficacy, in combination with mastery learning orientation and training performance. Both the knowledge structure and the trainees’ self efficacy accounted for significant variance in the prediction of performance adaptability while the individual differences in ability and learning traits were associated with different learning outcomes. Kozlowski, et al. concluded that self-efficacy was important to situations where transfer demands that the trainees’ adapt the knowledge and skills to meet novel situational demands.

Ford, Smith, Weissbein, Gully and Salas (1998) similarly examined how undergraduate students', who had participated in radar operations skills training, learning strategies and training outcomes influenced the transfer of software program learning to a more complex task. Ford, et al. found, through the use of questionnaires, that a mastery orientation was related to the metacognitive ability learning strategy or the individual's knowledge of and control over his or her cognitions, including planning, monitoring and revising goal appropriate behavior. Metacognitive ability, in turn, was related to the training outcomes of knowledge acquisition, skilled performance at the end of the training, and self-efficacy. All of these training outcomes influenced the transfer of learning to a more complex task. Ford, et al. also found that the mastery orientation and performance orientation were two separate constructs, and that "performance orientation was not related to learning strategies, but it did have some relationship with learning outcomes and transfer" (p. 229).

Gist and Bavetta (1990) studied through simulation, the influence of goal setting which includes establishing clear and specific goals, and self-management which includes goal setting as well as multiple techniques for influencing self-behavior training design on an individual's skill generalization, repetition and performance. They found that MBA students trained in the self-management model had significantly higher levels of training performance on a novel, complex task, and a superior capacity to generalize the learned skills to the trained task. Goal setting, on the other hand, was found to be associated with greater skill repetition.

#### *Self-efficacy.*

Gist, Stevens and Bavetta (1991) examined the effects of self-efficacy on the acquisition and retention of complex interpersonal skills, through questionnaires and self-reports. They found that MBA students' self-efficacy contributed positively to their performance. Students

who participated in self-management training had attenuated self-efficacy and performance while “goal setting [training] accentuated performance differences between high and low self-efficacy trainees” (p. 837). Gist, Schwoerer and Rosen (1989), in studying university managers and administrators who participated in micro computer software package training, also found that self-efficacy was related to performance. They further reported that modelling training was positively related to outcome, defined as mastery of the computer software, and measured by pre and post test scores. Frayne and Latham (1987), and Latham and Frayne (1989) also reported the relationship between self-management training, self-efficacy and retention of training program material.

Baldwin and Ford (1988), Noe (1986), Noe and Schmitt (1986), and Noe and Wilk (1993) found that transfer levels are influenced by personal characteristics such as the individual’s ability, motivation to learn, locus of control, previous experience and self-efficacy. They also noted that transfer levels are influenced by situational elements such as the individuals’ reaction to the training program, and their perceptions of the work environment, most notably their peers’ and supervisor’s support for the training.

*Participation in training and development decisions.*

Mathieu, Tannenbaum and Salas (1992) studied the influence of individual and situational characteristics on training effectiveness. They found that critical factors in the transfer of training were the university clerical and administrative support employees’ decision to participate in the training program, and the employees’ positive perceptions of the program in terms of their proofreading skills development. Mathieu, et al. suggested that these two factors mediated the trainee’s motivation on post-test performance scores. Baldwin and Magjuka (1991), in studying the effects of the choice of training program on student trainee motivation

and learning, also found, through control group measures, that full and part-time student trainees who were given their choice of training program had greater motivation to learn. Finally, Tannenbaum, Mathieu, Salas and Cannon-Bowers (1991), in examining naval recruits participating in socialization training, found that training fulfilment or “the extent to which training meets or fulfills a trainee’s expectations and desires” (p. 759) was positively related to post-training organizational commitment, self-efficacy and trainee motivation, as measured by pre and post-training questionnaires.

In summary, individual characteristics that facilitate the transfer of learning can generally be categorized as an individual’s attitudes and motivation, self-efficacy, and participation in training decisions. Within these three broad categories, the trainees’ metacognitive ability, self-management ability, level of commitment to the organization’s values and goals, and the trainee’s fulfilment of his or her training expectations were also found to facilitate transfer. The trainee’s perceptions of a supportive work environment, as well as the training program’s positive reputation were also important factors in facilitating the transfer of learning.

The transfer of learning research is fairly extensive, with many researchers earnestly attempting to understand this phenomenon and means of facilitating it. Within the three primary transfer sources, the training program’s design and development, the organizational climate and the individual learner’s characteristics, many variables were found to facilitate transfer. The next section of this chapter examines the three adult learning theories that, in addition to the transfer literature, framed this research.

### **The Adult Learning Theories**

On the basis of the transfer research findings, three adult learning theories which have particular relevance to transfer and workplace learning are self-directed learning, situated

cognition and transformational learning. These learning theories framed this research as they provided a useful context for understanding transfer from the adult learning perspective. Figure 2 graphically depicts these three theories. The next section of this chapter sequentially discusses the three adult learning theories.

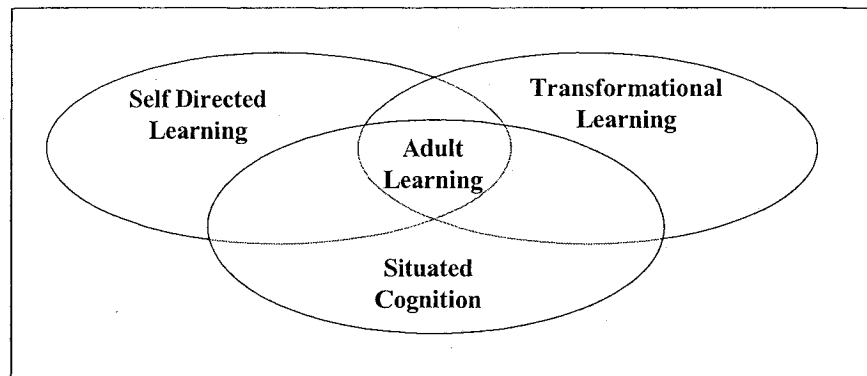


Figure 2: Adult learning - The three adult learning theories.

### *Self-Directed Learning*

Self-directed learning (SDL) continues to be “important to our present day understanding of adult learning” (Merriam, 2001, p. 3). SDL has been described in various ways. For some individuals, SDL refers to the learners’ personal attributes or characteristics such as their autonomy in assuming “primary responsibility for planning, carrying out, and evaluating their own learning experiences” (Merriam & Caffarella, 1991, p. 41). For other individuals, it is “a way of organizing instruction in formal settings that allows for greater learner-control” (Caffarella, 1993, p. 26) or “self-planned learning projects” (Tough, 1971, p. 92).

SDL is “highly valued as a personality trait and instructional process” (Chovenac, 1998, p. 309). Self directed learners are regarded for example, as independent learners who are disciplined, intrinsically motivated and possess an attitude of can do. The instructional process, on the other hand, centers on the learners’ learning needs, and emphasizes discussion and practice opportunities, for example. The following section discusses, in greater detail, the

learners' personal characteristics and the instructional process aspects of SDL.

*Personal characteristics.*

Personal autonomy is an essential concept of SDL, referring to the learner's independence, free choice and control, coupled with interdependence (Chovenac, 1998). Collins (1998) casts self-directed learners as "proactive inquirers who seek to learn as much as possible on their own terms" (p. 50). Self-directed learners are also viewed as having a strong sense of personal values and beliefs, and possessing a readiness to learn (Knowles, 1975). Self-directed learners conceive of their own learning goals and plans; exercise freedom of choice, self-restraint and self-discipline; rationally reflect on their learning strategies and activities; and have the power to follow through with their decisions (Candy, 1991). Self-directed learners also take responsibility for constructing personal meaning through critical reflection and for confirming that learning through collaborative or social activities. The self-directed learners' ability to self-monitor their thinking and learning strategies, are critical in assessing their learning outcomes and future learning strategies (Garrison, 1997).

Self-directed learners have also been cast as disciplined, proactive inquirers, who are competent, analytical, reflective, self aware and open to learning (Candy, 1991; Merriam & Caffarella, 1999). They are typically intrinsically motivated, genuinely interested in the subject and have an attitude of can do (Garrison, 1997; Hiemstra & Brockett, 1994).

While autonomy figures prominently in SDL discussions, it clearly does not refer to learning as a fully autonomous and isolated activity. Brookfield (1986), Candy (1991) and Garrison (1997) all argued that meaning and knowledge development are both personally and socially constructed. Association with and assistance from others are necessary to SDL and are sought by self-directed learners (Chovenac, 1998). In fact, the "advice, information and the skill

modeling provided by other learners are crucial conditions for self-directed learning”

(Brookfield, 1986, p. 44).

SDL is “an approach where learners are motivated to assume personal responsibility and collaborative control of the cognitive (self-monitoring) and contextual (self-management) processes in constructing and confirming meaningful and worthwhile learning outcomes” (Garrison, 1997, p. 18). Tough (1979) referred to this process as self-planned learning and identified 13 steps that a self-directed learner would likely engage in. Among these steps are the learners deciding themselves what knowledge and skills they would like or need to learn; deciding on the specific activities, methods, resources or equipment for the learning; deciding where to learn; setting specific learning deadlines; deciding the pace of the learning; estimating their current level of knowledge or skills, and the progress of their learning; detecting factors that block their learning; and finding time for the learning.

Candy (1991) further suggested that self-directed learners not only take the initiative for learning but also for diagnosing or assessing their own learning needs; and developing, through a process of inquiry and reflection, an appreciation for the criteria by which to evaluate the learning being undertaken. Candy added that these learners continually review the process of learning as both a cognitive and a social phenomenon; make strategic and tactical adjustments in their learning approach to optimize their learning potential; demonstrate a sober and realistic appraisal of their shortcomings and limitations; and evaluate their strengths, abilities, and motivations as learners.

#### *Instructional process.*

The instructional process refers to ways of organizing instruction and integrating self-directed learning methods into training programs and activities. This instructional process is

typically centered on the learners' needs and is commonly referred to as the learner-centered instructional process (Caffarella, 1993).

In many respects, the principles of designing and developing SDL educational and training programs are premised on the program development and design principles of andragogy (Candy, 1991, Hammond & Collins, 1991; Merriam & Caffarella, 1991). Seven stages of program development are generally involved. These stages consist of establishing an organizational climate conducive to learning; creating a mechanism for the mutual planning of the program; diagnosing the learning or learners' needs; formulating program objectives; designing a pattern of learning experiences; conducting and evaluating the learning activities; and developing learning contracts (Knowles, 1984). The design principles include the instructor, for example, involving the learners in a self-diagnosis of their experiences and learning needs, and in the planning of their own learning efforts; and involving management, line managers and the learners in identifying the program's needs and objectives. It also involves facilitating discussions; exposing learners to a variety of instructional techniques such as case studies or role playing; emphasizing the practical application of what is learned; organizing the curriculum so that it is problem-centered; and creating a respectful, supportive, collaborative and trusting learning climate (Knowles, 1980).

Garrison (1992) noted that SDL is a collaborative approach between the training program instructor and learner, and involves the social, the implementation of the learner's learning intentions and cognitive aspects of learning such as self-monitored learning strategies. Both the instructor and the learners are actively engaged throughout the learning activity in constructing meaning (Candy, 1991). Brookfield (1993) posited that fully formed self-directed learners would determine what is important for them to learn and make informed choices about those learning

requirements. “In other words, the individuals focus on their need to be responsible for framing their own changes and taking responsibility for their own decisions rather than ceding to others” (pp. 233-234).

SDL focuses on the learners’ characteristics and on developing and designing training programs, in particular. Self directed learners possess characteristics such as intrinsic motivation, responsibility and self discipline, all essential characteristics in ensuring adult learners’ continuous learning and application efforts. The SDL theory however, has been the subject of much debate. While the learning context is important in this theory, it is not as prominent as in the other two learning theories. Further, Merriam and Caffarella (1999) noted that there has been a lack of critical discussion on the SDL models, a scarcity of the data based studies and the research has been primarily based on quantitative research methodologies. The SDL theory has also been subject to various interpretations. Some of the writings referred to self directed learning as informal learning activities only (Tough, 1971; 2002), while others referred to formal training and placed an emphasis on the learners’ characteristics and the instructional process (Caffarella, 1993; Candy, 1991). Other writings referred to formal training in conjunction with advice and skill modeling, for example (Brookfield, 1993). For purposes of this study, the latter two interpretations were employed. In spite of its shortcomings, the SDL theory remains an important adult learning theory.

### *Situated Cognition*

From the adult learning perspective, in situated cognition people learn through social interaction. The learning, a function of the interaction between the learner and the learning environment, is set within a social context (Merriam & Caffarella, 1999). Learning is, therefore, not something that is inside an individual’s head but is rather, rooted and shaped by the social

context and the culture in which the learner participates, as well as by the tools used in the learning situation such as computers and references (Lave, 1996; Hansman, 2001; Wilson, 1993; Greeno, 1997). Without the learning context and the learner's participation in the activity, the cognition can not be understood (Brown, Collins & Duguid, 1989; Fenwick, 2000; Wilson, 1993). In contrast to learning as internalization, in situated cognition learning is achieved through the learner's increased participation in the community of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Competent action is, therefore, generated in the social relations and the tools of the context of the action, rather than in the learner's accumulation of the knowledge (St. Julien, 1997).

Situated cognition views experience as activity, and cognitive apprenticeships and communities of practice as essential to the individuals' learning. The next two sections of this chapter address these aspects of situated cognition.

#### *Experience as activity.*

Situated cognition views experience as activity. "Activity takes on a much more dynamic relation to learning. Adults no longer learn from experience, they learn in it, as they act in situations and are acted upon by situations" (Wilson, 1993, p. 75). In situated cognition, knowledge is "situated" in the context in which it is constructed. "That is, rather than being an entity outside of the context in which it is learned, knowledge is an integral part of the context in which it is learned and of the activity in which it is developed" (Griffin, 1995, p. 65). The human activities within specific situations are, therefore, integral to the learning and the knowing as they "structure how that learning and knowing occur" (Wilson, 1993, p. 73). The "learner must be situated within the culture to understand the meaning of the knowing and learning" (Brown, Collins & Duguid, 1989, p. 32). In situated cognition, meaning making is both a mental activity

and social interchange, with learning and knowing being fundamentally situated.

If learning and knowing are based on the actual practices of humans, then they must be located in authentic activity. Authentic activity referring to the ordinary cognitive practices that are situationally defined, tool dependent and socially interactive (Wilson, 1993). Lave (1996) added that the relationship between the person, activity and situation is integral to learning and action. She argued that action is socially constituted, “given meaning by its location in societally, historically generated systems of activity. Meaning is not created through individual intentions; it is mutually constituted in relations between activity systems and persons acting, and has a relational character. Context may be seen as the historically constituted concrete relations within and between situations” (p. 18).

In situated cognition, the learning is achieved through participation as a member of a sociocultural community. The participation, in turn, is based on the negotiation and renegotiation of meaning by the community of participants. Understanding and experience are in constant interaction. The knowing is inherent in the “growth and transformation of identities, ... located in the relations among practitioners, their practice, the artifacts of that practice, and the social organization and political economy of communities of practice. ... All of this takes place in a social world, dialectically constituted in social practices that are in the process of reproduction, transformation and change” (Lave & Wenger, 1991, pp. 122-123).

*Cognitive apprenticeships and communities of practice.*

Situated cognition has come to be viewed from the perspective of learning-in-practice or cognitive apprenticeships (Lave, 1997), and communities of practice (Wenger, 1998). These two perspectives assume that what is to be learned is socially and culturally constituted, with the learning being “integrally implicated in the forms in which it is appropriated” (Lave, 1997, p.

19). Internships, apprenticeships, modeling, mentoring and coaching are all important learning processes in these two perspectives as they provide learners with real-world, context based learning (Hansman, 2001; Merriam & Caffarella, 1999; Wilson, 1993). These two approaches are “based on assumptions that knowing, thinking, and understanding are generated in practice, in situations whose specific characteristics are part of practice as it unfolds” (Lave, 1997, p. 19).

In situated cognition, the learner must “learn not just what and how to perform, but also what the performance means in order to function and be accepted as a full member” of the community (Lemke, 1997, p. 43). Knowing the meaning of the activity is essential to participating as a member. Hansman (2001) posited that the “real world context is the best [learning] environment” (p. 46), permitting people through their participation in and interaction with the culture of learning to come to an understanding of the history, assumptions, rules and cultural values. Cognitive apprenticeships and communities of practice are viewed as offering the basic concepts and tools to better situate the learning, with the learners learning from the more experienced members of the community and through participation in the community.

Cognitive apprenticeships support learning in a particular domain by permitting individuals to acquire, develop, and use the cognitive tools in an authentic activity. Through conversations and working collaboratively with other individuals, the meaning of the activity is understood, ideas are exchanged and modified, and belief systems are developed and appropriated. Behavior modeling and coaching whereby the more experienced individual makes explicit their tacit knowledge, are important cognitive apprenticeship strategies. Apprenticeships provide “the beginner with access to both the overt spaces of the skill and the more hidden inner processes of thought” (Rogoff, 1990, p. 40). Apprenticeship is viewed as “an essential instructional mechanism for the learner to gain situational proficiency” (Wilson, 1993, p. 77).

Kirshner & Whitson (1997) explained that situated cognition focuses on the structures and interrelationships within the activity systems by examining the appropriation of knowledge within the zone of proximal development (ZPD). ZPD referring to an interactive system within which people work on a problem which at least one of them could not work on effectively alone. Lave and Wenger (1991) further explained that newcomers become part of a community through the process of legitimate peripheral participation (LPP). The mastery of the relevant knowledge and skills requires that the newcomers move toward full participation in the sociocultural practices of a community. LPP permits newcomers to learn through participation - "of both absorbing and being absorbed in - the "culture of practice". An extended period of legitimate peripherality provides learners with opportunities to make the culture of practice theirs" (p. 95).

Wenger (1998) described the theory of community of practice as one where the primary focus is on learning as a social participant. Social participation referring to "a more encompassing process of being active participants in the practices of social communities and constructing identities in relation to these communities. ... Such participation shapes not only what we do, but also who we are and how we interpret what we do" (p. 4).

Communities of practice consist of a number of people who are "informally bound together by their shared expertise and passion for a joint enterprise. Through sharing their experiences and knowledge they foster new approaches to problems" (Wenger & Snyder, 2000, pp. 139-142). Communities of practice are typically informal with the members self-identifying, organizing themselves, setting their own agendas and establishing their own leadership. Communities of practice highlight the importance of social context and the processes of modeling and mentoring (Wenger & Snyder, 2000).

In a formal learning activity, the instructor would need to ensure that the training program

is heavily steeped in real-world practices. Lemke (1997) noted that in situated cognition we “learn in activity, and in a community of practice, but we also learn many things across activities and communities of practice” (p. 52). In training programs, the instructors would need to address the practices of the community. A strong work related component would need to be included in the training program and individuals from the community of practice invited to participate in the program. These measures act to strengthen the network connections between the training program and the professional activity. The instructors should also arrange for practice opportunities so that the learners come to understand the context of the problem and in this sense, come to own the problems (Lave, 1997). The knowledge that the trainees acquire in the training program also needs to be contextualized, demonstrating the “local character of [the] knowledge” (Kirshner & Whitson, 1997, p. 12). Guided participation where bridges are made for the learners from the known to the new situation should also be provided, as well as structuring the learning situations so that responsibility can be transferred to the learner. Such learning activities would include joint problem solving or managing activities (Rogoff, 1990). All of these training design and development suggestions are important means of instructing for situated cognition.

In situated cognition, the context and the learners’ participation in the community are paramount to learning. The learners learn primarily through a process of involvement in the activities of their community of practice and through cognitive apprenticeships. The situated cognition theory however, does not adequately address the matter of independent learners and the integration of new ideas or practices into the community. Further, it places an emphasis on apprenticeships or the modeling of behaviors as a means of the individuals learning the practices and cultural norms of the community. Such activities may however, lead to undesirable practices as the more experienced learners may have developed inappropriate behaviors or the community

itself may have adopted inefficient or ineffective practices. Bad practices may, therefore, be perpetuated within the community of practice. As well, mentors, coaches and managers are positioned as possessing the necessary knowledge, skills or attitudes. As a result, there is a potential power structure within the community with the learners not having much opportunity to truly participate in the community in terms of decision making or critiquing the ineffective or inefficient practices (Fenwick, 2000).

### *Transformational Learning*

Transformational learning theory provides a basis for understanding how adults interpret and make sense of their experiences, and take action in their world (Merriam & Caffarella, 1999). Transformational learning is defined as “the process of learning through critical self-reflection, which results in the reformulation of a meaning perspective to allow a more inclusive, discriminating, and integrative understanding of one’s experience” (Mezirow, 1990, p. xvi). In transformational learning, learning involves a proactive thinking process and refers to “the social process of constructing and appropriating a new or revised interpretation of the meaning of one’s experience as a guide to action” (Mezirow, 1994, pp. 222-223). This section of the chapter addresses transformational learning in general and the transformational learning process.

#### *The cognitive process.*

Unlike SDL, which focuses on the adult learners’ characteristics and the learning process, transformative learning focuses on the cognitive processes of learning. The mental construction of the learners’ experiences, inner meaning and reflection are common components of the transformational learning approach (Merriam & Caffarella, 1999). Transformational learning addresses the actual process of learning or meaning formation and has as its centerpiece, the structuring of meaning from experience (Clark, 1993).

Transformational learning is regarded as a “central process of adult development” (Mezirow, 1991, p. 155). Transformational learning “for emancipatory education is the business of all adult educators” (Merriam, 1995, p. 123) and if one “views adult education as the means through which individuals and society are shaped and changed, fostering emancipatory learning is [a] central goal of adult education” (Cranton, 1994, p. 19). Mezirow (1998) posited that “critical reflection of assumptions and its variant critical self reflection on assumptions are emancipatory dimensions of adult learning, the function of thought and language that frees the learner from frames of reference, paradigms or cultural beliefs that limit or distort communication and understanding” (p. 191). From Mezirow’s perspective, transformative learning is the essence of adult education as it seeks to help learners become more autonomous thinkers who negotiate their own values, meanings and purposes (Mezirow, 1997a). Learning to “think for oneself involves becoming critically reflective of assumptions and participation in discourse to validate beliefs, intentions, values and feelings” (Mezirow, 1998, p. 197). It is “the process of freeing ourselves from forces that limit our options and control our lives, forces seen as beyond our control or taken for granted” (Cranton, 1994, p. 16).

Transformational learning, which changes the way people see themselves and their world, has been juxtaposed to informational learning, which extends and changes what we know. In transformational learning, knowledge is created through rational thought and reflection, and through the interpretation and reinterpretation of our previous and new experiences (Baumgartner, 2001). Individuals often hold assumptions and perspectives, based on their previous experiences, which they have never questioned. It is the questioning and changing of those assumptions, through a process of critical reflection, that forms the heart of transformational learning. Critical reflection that leads to changes in our assumptions and

perhaps even transforms our perspectives on the world (Cranton, 1998).

Transformational learning, often precipitated by disorienting dilemmas, causes the learners to critically self-examine their assumptions and beliefs about the world. Mezirow (1997a) posited however, that we “do not make transformative changes in the way we learn as long as what we learn fits comfortably in our existing frames of reference” (p. 7). Through the process of critical reflection, which is central to the process of knowing, individuals revise their assumptions which, in turn, produce a fundamental shift in their beliefs, values and perspectives (Clark, 1993; Scott, 1998; Sokol & Cranton, 1998). Critical reflection or the “examination of the justification for one’s beliefs, primarily to guide action and to reassess the efficacy of the strategies and procedures used in problem solving” (Mezirow, 1990, p. xvi), enables individuals to correct distortions in their beliefs, values or attitudes.

Mezirow (1997a) stated that “transformative learning is the process of effecting change in a frame of reference” (p. 5). Frames of reference are “the structure of assumptions through which we understand our experiences. ... They set our line of action. ... When circumstances permit, transformative learners move toward a frame of reference that is more inclusive, discriminating, self-reflective, and integrative of experience” (p. 5). A frame of reference includes both habits of mind and points of view. Habits of mind refer to habitual ways of thinking, feeling and acting. Points of view, on the other hand, are subject to continuous change and are precipitated by our reflection on the content or process by which we solve our problems and modify our assumptions.

#### *Transformational learning process.*

Transformational learning takes place in interpersonal and social cultural challenges (McDonald, Cervero & Courtenay, 1999). Learning in transformational learning occurs by the

learners elaborating existing points of view or meaning schemes such as their beliefs, feelings and attitudes, or establishing new points of view or schemes. It also occurs by the learners transforming their points of view or transforming their habits of mind or perspectives such as their assumptions about the world (Mezirow, 1997a; Mezirow, 1997b).

Mezirow (1991) suggested that transformational learning involves three phases. These phases consist of “critical reflection on one’s assumptions, discourse to validate the critically reflective insight, and action” (Mezirow, 1997b, p. 60). Through critical reflection on the content of a problem, the process of how things came to be, and the questioning of the premise of the problem itself, individuals transform their views of the world (Cranton, 1998).

Transformational learning is proactive. The self-reflective thinking process in which “the social process of constructing and appropriating a new or revised interpretation of the meaning of one’s experience ... [guides the individual’s] action” (Mezirow, 1994, pp. 222-223). Taking action is integral to transformative learning. It generally involves an empowered sense of self, a critical understanding of how one’s social relations and culture have shaped one’s beliefs and feelings, and developing strategies for taking action (Mezirow, 1991). Transformational learning can transform how the learners view themselves, their context and their role within that context, critical elements for the transfer of learning.

Through reflection on the content of a problem, the process or how things came to be and the premise of the problem itself, individuals transform their views of the world (Cranton, 1998). Mezirow (1996) described transformational learning as an evolving theory, premised on key propositions. These assumptions include: 1) learning is a process of using a prior interpretation to construct a new or revised interpretation of the meaning of one’s experiences to guide action, 2) a frame of reference consists of two dimensions: a) meaning perspectives which

consist of generalized, orienting predispositions, and b) meaning schemes or beliefs, feelings, attitudes, and value judgements that accompany and shape an interpretation, 3) when a belief, such as a habit that guides action, fails in practice or becomes problematic through changing circumstances, an individual can transform their frames of reference through critical reflection on the frame's assumptions, 4) learning occurs by elaborating existing meaning schemes, learning new schemes, transforming schemes or transforming perspectives, and 5) taking action involves situational, emotional and informational constraints that may require a learning experience.

The principles for designing and developing educational programs for transformational learning are also based on androgogy's principles (Cranton, 1996; Mezirow, 1991). Learning contracts, group projects, role plays, case studies and simulations are classroom methods most associated with transformational education. In a transformational learning situation however, the educator would "actively encourage discourse through which learners can examine the justification for their meaning schemes and perspectives, as well as focusing on the new data presented" (Mezirow, 1991, pp. 199-201). When the learners are clear about their assumptions and the origin of those assumptions, they can choose to question those assumptions and assess their validity in their current life contexts (Cranton, 1996).

In transformational learning, the learners' cognitive abilities are paramount to the learning. The context of the learners' current life situations and the learning process are also important. The adult learners' ability to reflect, dialogue and take action are particularly important to the learning process. The transformational learning theory is however, regarded as having shortcomings. It is viewed for example, as primarily a rationalist approach with the learners being the "primary actor[s] in the processes of knowledge construction" (Merriam & Caffarella, 1999, p. 249). Learning is also viewed as distinct from the context. In fact, some

individuals have argued that the context is under theorized in the theory (Fenwick, 2000; Merriam & Caffarella, 1999).

In summary, SDL is differentiated from the two other learning theories in that it provides a description of the learners and their learning processes. The learners self-manage and assume primary responsibility for their learning experiences. In situated cognition, the context of the learning is extremely important. Learning is situated in the context in which it is constructed. The context and the learners' participation, through cognitive apprenticeships and communities of practice, structure how the learning and knowing occur, as well as the what and how to perform. Transformational learning, through reflection on one's meaning schemes and perspectives, and through discourse with others, produces a fundamental change in the way individuals view and act in their world. Transformational learning relates more directly to the actual cognitive processes involved in learning and meaning formation. The context of the learners' current life situations are also important.

In the transfer research review, the majority of the studies were conducted in business and psychology fields of inquiry. These fields of inquiry are typically steeped in quantitative approaches, ask different questions and have their own particular worldviews. The studies were indeed predominantly quantitative in nature. They typically employed experimental and quasi experimental approaches such as self-reports, control groups, and pre and post test scores. The "majority of the research [also] used simple tasks, [and the] training [was] evaluated using criteria of immediate reproduction and short-term retention. As a consequence, the design strategies currently in use are most relevant when trainees must reproduce behaviors or motor skills as closely as possible to the training material" (Smith, Ford & Kozlowski, 1997, p. 89). The research for the most part did not, therefore, address the issue of adaptability.

In today's workplaces, with the speed at which knowledge, skills and attitudes are required to change, and the speed at which employees change jobs, individuals must have the ability to adapt their learning to new contexts. The transfer research did not conceptualize transfer as adaptability or the "trainees' capability to adjust [their] knowledge and skills in the face of novel situations or requirements" (Ford & Weissbein, 1997, p. 39). Rather, the design strategies, for the most part, are relevant when the learners must reproduce their behaviors "as closely as possible to the training material" (Smith, et. al, p. 89). The issue of adaptability, therefore, requires address.

Finally, the transfer research, for the most part, is siloed in its approach. There is no real sense of the relationship between the three transfer sources, the relative importance of the three transfer sources, nor of the employees' experiences with transfer. "Future research needs to focus more attention to which person and situational factors may interact to affect learning and transfer" (Ford & Weissbein, 1997, pp. 38-39). The learners' experiences with and their perceptions of transfer and the possible interrelationships between the three transfer sources are lacking in the transfer research, including an understanding of the socially constructed nature of the learners' reality.

Examining employees' perceptions of and experiences with the transfer of learning, particularly as they relate to training programs that require employees to adapt the knowledge, skills and attitudes to their workplace activities, and the interplay between the three primary transfer sources, are areas that require further study. The three adult learning theories, which focus to varying degrees on the learner, context and learning process, are seemingly well positioned to bring an understanding to the adult learners' transfer experience and to illuminate the interrelationships between the three primary transfer sources. Further, the theories may be

well positioned to integrate the quantitative research findings to date into a more coherent body of knowledge, and bring a different and valuable perspective to the transfer subject. The three adult learning theories and the transfer of learning literature appear to be appropriate lenses in which to frame this research.

### **Purpose of the Research**

The transfer of learning is a key factor in the degree of success that employees and organizations achieve in their workplace learning efforts. In fact, it can be argued that transfer is fundamental to individual and organizational performance, with real implications for an economy's competitive success. On the basis of the transfer of learning literature critique, there is much that we continue to need to understand about this phenomenon, most notably the interaction between the three primary transfer sources, and employees' perceptions of and experiences with transfer.

The purpose of this research was to gain an understanding of federal government administrative, professional and managerial employees' perceptions of and experiences with the transfer of learning, to address the interaction between the three primary transfer sources and to understand whether the adult learning theories are indeed well positioned to bring a different perspective to the transfer subject. The overarching research question which guided this study was what are the employees' lived experiences with the transfer of learning? The subquestions were how do employees experience transfer, when does transfer enter their learning experience and why do they believe that transfer has occurred?

Let us now turn our attention to the research methodology employed in this study. Chapter three outlines the research's approach and design.

### CHAPTER THREE

#### Methodology

The purpose of this chapter is to outline the research approach and research design employed in this study. This chapter provides a restatement of the study's purpose and research questions, discusses the selection process and the participants, and outlines the data collection, analysis and interpretation activities. Finally, it discusses the trustworthiness of the research and provides a summary of the discussions.

Ottoson (1997) stated that “qualitative studies, grounded in participant experiences, are needed to identify the universe of influences on application” (p. 105). Baldwin and Magjuka (1997) echoed these sentiments and argued that “it is incumbent on training researchers to gather more information from the perspective of the trainee, ... the training literature would benefit enormously from more qualitative data” (pp. 122-123).

The transfer literature to date begs the questions, how do individuals experience the transfer of learning, what are the learner's lived transfer experiences, what factors from the employees' perspective facilitate and inhibit that transfer, when does transfer enter their learning experience and what are their perceptions of the interplay between the three transfer sources on their transfer of learning experiences?

By exploring and gaining, through qualitative research approaches, an understanding of employees' perceptions of and experiences with transfer, a greater understanding may be brought to the transfer of learning subject matter in general, new transfer issues that require exploration may be identified, the interrelationships between the three transfer sources may be better understood, and the quantitative research findings to date may be integrated into a more coherent body of knowledge. “The evaluation of adult education programs needs to look beyond the

outcomes to the process of how adults apply learning. ... The wide range of contextual, personal, interpersonal, and technical factors that affect process and outcome need to be accounted for” (Ottoson, 1995a, pp. 27-28), issues which qualitative research approaches are adept at addressing.

### **Research Approach**

Qualitative research is “a field of inquiry” (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998b, p. 2) that is concerned with understanding social phenomenon from the research participants’ perspective. It typically uses an emergent design, is highly dependent on the researcher’s role, and has a particular interest in understanding the context in and processes by which human action takes place (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992; Denzin & Lincoln, 1998a; McMillan & Schumacher, 1997; Miles & Huberman, 1994).

The qualitative interview generally provides an opportunity to obtain rich, deep and descriptive data from which the meaning of the research participants’ experiences, perceptions, assumptions and meaning making can be captured, bringing an understanding of the phenomenon to the social world. The meanings that people hold for their everyday activities and the complexity of a phenomenon can be described and understood through the interview process (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992; Marshall & Rossman, 1999; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Seidman, 1998).

The intimate relationship that is typically formed between the researcher and the research participants during the interview(s), provides an opportunity for both parties to explore the subject matter and to share and discuss experiences, perceptions, assumptions and meaning making in a manner that no other research method can capture. Interviews, therefore, have a strong potential for revealing complex situations and for providing thick descriptions that “have a

ring of truth that has a strong impact on the reader” (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 10).

Phenomenology is an inductive research strategy (Merriam & Simpson, 1995) that examines lived experiences and the ways in which individuals come to understand their experiences and develop a worldview. Phenomenology “is the study of the lifeworld - the world as we immediately experience it pre-reflectively rather than as we conceptualize, categorize, or reflect on it” (van Manen, 1997, p. 9). It examines lived experiences prior to interpretation and theorizing (Creswell, 1998; Kvale, 1996). Phenomenology seeks to describe and understand the meanings of our everyday lives, what it means to live a life. As a research approach, it systematically attempts to uncover and describe the internal meaning structures of lived experience (van Manen, 1997). Phenomenology offers “plausible insights that bring us in more direct contact with the world” (van Manen, p. 9). It seeks to create meaning of the lifeworld, familiar actions, behaviors and experiences, to discover what certain phenomenon mean and how they are experienced by individuals. Phenomenology, while seeking to construct a full interpretative description of some phenomenon, “remains cognizant that life is more complex than any explanation” (p. 18).

Phenomenology rests on the assumption that there is a structure and essence to shared experiences that can be narrated (Creswell, 1998), and that the deep, lived meanings that events have for individuals, guide their actions and interactions (Marshall & Rossman, 1999). Lived experience has a “certain essence, a “quality” that we recognize in retrospect” (van Manen, p. 36). The purpose of phenomenological interviews is to describe the meaning of a concept or phenomenon that several individuals share in common. Researchers generally use open-ended questions with the goal of having the “participant reconstruct his or her experience within the topic under study” (Seidman, 1998, p. 9). The open-ended questions establish the “territory to be

explored” while permitting the participants to respond in the manner in which they deem appropriate (p. 70).

Hermeneutics or “the study of the interpretation of texts” (Kvale, 1996, p. 46) helps in explaining and interpreting the dialogue produced in the interviews. “By elucidating the dialogue producing the interview texts to be interpreted, and then by clarifying the subsequent process of interpreting the interview texts produced, which may again be conceived as a dialogue ... with the text. ... Hermeneutics is then doubly relevant to interview research” (p. 46). According to van Manen (1997), “hermeneutic phenomenological research may be seen as a dynamic interplay among six research activities” (p. 30). These research activities include the researcher’s interest in the phenomenon, investigation of the participants’ lived experience, reflection on themes which characterize the phenomenon, description of the phenomenon in written form, maintenance of a strong and oriented relation to the phenomenon, and balancing of the research context by considering the parts and the whole.

### **Research Design**

This section of the study addresses the research’s design. It provides a discussion of the selection process, the participants, and the data collection, analysis and interpretation activities. Finally, it discusses the trustworthiness of the research.

#### *Selection Process*

A Director from the Human Resources Branch (HRB), in the department where I am employed was approached, in person, in the fall of 2000 to discuss this research and the possibility of her/him assisting in identifying the potential research subjects. An official in the Access to Information Office (AIO) was also approached, by telephone, to discuss this research and my desire to conduct the research with departmental employees. The AIO official noted that

she did not have any problems with me interviewing and conducting a focus group with departmental employees but requested that an official from HRB contact the employees directly to see if they would be interested in participating. The AIO official stipulated that so long as the employees were agreeable, participated voluntarily and were aware of the requirements at the outset of the research process, the AIO did not have any problems with the research being conducted with departmental employees.

In January, 2001 the Director in HRB was reapproached, provided with a copy of the research proposal and the criteria for participant selection, and her/his participation confirmed, pending the Faculty of Graduate Studies' Ethics Committee approval. Following the approval of the study from the Ethics Committee, in mid February, 2001, the HRB Director began the participant selection process.

The HRB Director, in order to ensure that her/his position did not unduly influence the participants' voluntary participation, requested that one of her/his staff members: a) contact individuals who had participated in the identified in-house training programs, b) determine their interest in participating in the research and c) ask for their permission to provide the researcher with their name and telephone number, for my follow up. I immediately followed-up with the selected HR staff member to explain the purpose of the research, the requirements of the participants, and the criteria for participant selection.

The research participants were selected according to a number of criteria. These criteria included the participants' availability and willingness to participate in two interviews and a focus group session. They also had to have participated in formal, departmental in-house training courses in the past four to six months, namely, the Power of Communications, People-Oriented Management or Project Management courses. Two-three participants were to be selected from

the same departmental training program to ensure some consistency in experiences, and an equal number of administrative, professional staff and middle managers was required to provide a more diverse population and potentially, perspectives. The four to six month time period was believed to permit the participants to fairly easily recollect their training experience and provide them with an opportunity to apply the knowledge, skills and attitudes gained during their training program in their work activities. Participants also had to have at least six to twelve months experience in their current position. This level of experience would ensure that the participants were familiar with the work demands, their colleagues and the organizational culture, and were, therefore, more comfortable in applying the training in their workplace activities. Finally, the participants were selected by their ability to communicate in the English language.

The HR staff member identified potential participants, according to the selection criteria, and followed-up by telephone with each individual to determine their interest in participating in this research. Those individuals who expressed an interest were informed that the researcher would contact them directly and would address any further questions that they might have. I was, in turn, provided with the potential participants names and telephone numbers.

I followed-up with the potential participants by telephone, according to a recruitment script (Appendix A), and pre-screened the individuals to ensure that, in their opinion, they had transferred some of the knowledge, skills and attitudes from the training course to their work activities. The prescreening ensured that I would be interviewing individuals who, for the most part, had actually transferred their learning from the training program to their workplace. The potential participants were prescreened according to the following questions:

1. Did you find the training program useful?
2. Have you applied anything that you learned in the program to your workplace tasks? This

learning can include new information, a new skill or a change in your perspective or attitude.

3. Can you provide me with an example of something that you learned in the training program that you have applied in your workplace?

Individuals who responded positively to these questions were verbally apprised of the purpose and process of the study, and how the data would be collected and used. The participants were also informed that their participation was entirely voluntary, that their responses would remain confidential and that they could withdraw from the study at any time, without any consequences. The individuals were further informed that a formal letter of request, outlining the discussed information, would be provided to them at the time of the formal interview.

While many telephone calls were made to potential candidates by the HRB staff member, only five of the seven research participants - three from the Power of Communications (POC), a two day course, and two from the People-Oriented Management Program (POMP), a three day course, were identified through this selection process. Other potential departmental employees noted that while they were interested in the research, their work requirements did not permit their participation.

As six to eight participants were sought for the study, a manager responsible for Organizational Development in one of the department's sectors was approached to determine if participants in the Leadership Training Program (LTP) might be willing to participate. The LTP was a ten day course; five days on Leadership Skills and five days on the Machinery of Government. This manager was informed of the research's purpose, the requirements of the participants and the participant selection criteria. This manager similarly followed-up with

potential participants and provided me with the names and telephone numbers of the interested employees. I subsequently, followed-up with the potential participants as per the recruitment script and prescreening questions. Two individuals eagerly agreed to participate in the research, while a third individual mentioned that if she was really needed, she would participate but, once again, time was an issue. The selection process resulted in three individuals from the POC, two from the POMP and two from the LTP.

The prescreening process, on the other hand, resulted in five of the seven individuals identifying specific examples of their transfer of learning. One of the participants suggested that it was hard to say but he probably had transferred something, but couldn't think of a transfer example at that moment. The seventh individual stated that he too couldn't think of a specific transfer example but believed that he had probably internalized a lot of the course material. This sample was believed to be appropriate for the research as five of the participants had identified an example of their transfer. The other two individuals were believed to provide potentially different perspectives, if indeed they had not transferred any of the knowledge, skills or attitudes acquired during the training program to their work activities. A total of seven federal government employees from the administrative, professional and managerial levels comprised this study's purposeful sample.

The study's sample size was premised on Kvale's (1996) and Creswell's (1998) work. Kvale noted that "in current interview studies, the number of interviews tend to be around 15, plus or minus 10" (p. 102). Creswell, on the other hand, suggested that "as many as 10 individuals" is appropriate (p. 122). The sample size of 6-8 interview participants was believed to be sufficient for this study as it was the "quality rather than the quantity of the interviews" that was most important (Kvale, 1996, p. 103).

In terms of the content of the three courses, the POC was intended to maximize the power of interpersonal communications. It included a communications process model and provided the participants with an opportunity to identify their personal communications style, and to develop and practice effective communication skills (e.g., sending and receiving skills). It also examined communications techniques in the workplace. This course included training program methods such as questions and response exercises, communication challenges (e.g., managing stress levels, developing trust), role plays, feedback exercises and a questionnaire on personal communication styles. The POMP, on the other hand, was intended to sensitize the participants to crucial people-centered elements in today's work environment and to provide them with tools for success. The awareness and skills developed over the course included helping participants understand their leadership patterns, appreciate different preferences and approaches among team members, and gain a clear working knowledge of the factors influencing communication. It also included listening skills and coaching for results techniques. The training methods employed included a coaching exercise, videos, the Myers Briggs personality test questionnaire, and feedback exercises.

Finally, the LTP was intended to improve employees' leadership competencies, and enhance their potential for promotion to the management level. The leadership skills part of the training program sought to develop an awareness of personal, interpersonal and team leadership skills. The Machinery of Government part sought to develop the participants' understanding of the global context, political infrastructure, bureaucracy, governance, financial administration, and leadership principles and practices. The training program methods employed in this course included communications skills, feedback and conflict resolution exercises. A mock interview was also used. Appendix B provides a more extensive summary of the in-house training

programs' course outline and the training methods employed.

### *Participants*

The federal government department views its employees as its most important resource and has numerous initiatives underway to ensure that its people-management practices position the department as a workplace of choice. These initiatives include mentoring programs, employee personal learning plans and developmental tools for managers on human resources career management. The department places particular importance on employee training, offering varied in-house training courses, and supports employee education leave, non-departmental education and training activities, and conference attendance. The employees are generally well educated, with many possessing Master's degrees, and generally occupy professional positions such as policy analysts/advisors and program managers.

The study sample consisted of three females and four males. Two of the females were managers and the remaining one, a junior officer in the professional community. One of the males was a manager, two were senior officers and one a junior officer from the administrative and support community. All of the participants were full time employees and ranged in age from the early thirties to the late fifties. The majority of the participants possessed a university degree and were in their current positions from a year and a half to six and a half years. Table 2 provides a profile of the participants.

**Table 2**  
**A Profile of the Participants**

<b>Participant</b>	<b>Approximate age</b>	<b># of years in their position</b>	<b>Position within the organization</b>	<b>Course participation</b>
<b>John</b>	48	2.0	Senior officer	POC
<b>Bonnie</b>	40	6.5	Junior officer	POC
<b>Joseph</b>	57	5.0	Senior officer	POC
<b>Jared</b>	50	2.0	Manager	POMP
<b>Blake</b>	32	1.5	Junior officer	POMP
<b>Susan</b>	37	5.0	Manager	Leadership
<b>Janice</b>	39	1.5	Manager	Leadership

The participants were all very articulate and professional. They were all eager to participate in the interviews, were prompt, and responded thoughtfully to the interview questions, sharing a lot about themselves. They also thoughtfully and critically, as a means of confirming their interview conversations, reviewed the interview narratives which were provided to them following the formal interviews. All of the participants provided their feedback on the narratives, either through face-to-face or telephone conversations. Five of the seven interview participants subsequently, participated in the focus group session. All five of the focus group participants were fully engaged in the discussions, exploring new issues and confirming or critiquing the themes which emerged from the analysis of the interviews.

The majority of the participants commented that they learned a lot about themselves through the interviews, narratives and focus group session. The research interview process, in allowing the participants to describe their experiences, appeared to have helped them in “clarifying and elaborating their own perspective on their lived world” (Kvale, 1996, p. 105).

The interview process also helped me in clarifying and elaborating my own perspective as well.

I was in awe and grateful for the participants' level of commitment to the research. They were prompt in replying to all of my requests, bright and eager, and expressed their willingness to participate in each stage of the research process. I felt very fortunate to meet these individuals and engage in conversations with them. All of the participants noted their interest in receiving a summary of the research findings.

### *Data Collection*

#### *Interview questionnaire development.*

The interview questionnaire was developed on the basis of the transfer research literature, areas identified as requiring address and my understanding of the subject. The interview questions drawn from the transfer research related to the individual's characteristics, the training program's design and development features, and the organizational climate characteristics. The questions, premised on areas identified in the transfer research as requiring address, related to the issue of adaptability, and the interrelationships between the three primary transfer sources. Finally, the questions developed on the basis of my understanding of the subject matter, related to the challenges that the participants faced in applying their learning, changes that were required at the departmental level to facilitate their transfer efforts, and the how and when questions. The development of the interview questionnaire was, therefore, a process of me orienting myself to the transfer of learning phenomenon and designing the study to obtain the intended knowledge - the participants' perceptions of and experiences with the transfer of learning (Kvale, 1996; van Manen, 1997).

In early January, 2001 the interview questionnaire was test piloted to ensure that the questions were easily understood and would solicit the type of responses that the research sought

to gain. Individuals from the administrative support (1), professional (2) and middle manager (1) levels were requested to provide feedback on the interview questionnaire. Three of these individuals were females. The individuals, all known to the researcher through departmental committee work or work activities, were regarded as good representatives of their respective working levels and individuals who would provide considered feedback.

All of these individuals were provided with the four main research questions and informed that employees from the administrative support, professional and managerial levels would be invited to participate in the interviews. The individuals were then requested to provide feedback on the wording and the clarity of the questions, and asked to make suggestions for word changes. Their comments were integrated and the amended interview questionnaire was reforwarded to them for further consideration. All of these individuals responded that the questions were clear and that the interview participants should not have a problem in addressing them.

Being prudent in approach, a mock interview with a former colleague from another department was then conducted to obtain a sense of the type of responses that might be elicited during the interview. This individual's interview responses, feedback and my reflections on the mock interview were all considered. The interview questionnaire was subsequently amended, though only minor, to reflect these factors. The interview questionnaire was further reviewed by a colleague who had participated in the original feedback group. Her suggestions for minor word changes were integrated and these questions formed the final research interview questionnaire. This colleague, a very bright and competent senior professional who is also from the research community, eventually participated in the focus group session as an observer. Her role was one of providing feedback on the interview questionnaire, my approach to the focus

group discussion and the focus group narrative. Her feedback on the narrative ensured that the focus group discussions were objectively and appropriately captured.

*Formal interview.*

The interview has been described as “learning to hear others” through conversation (Rubin & Rubin, 1995, viii) and a “construction site of knowledge” (Kvale, 1996, p. 2). Through the interview, the researcher explores, gathers data and seeks to understand the “world from the subjects’ point of view, to unfold the meaning of people’s experience, to uncover their lived world prior to scientific explanations” (Kvale, 1996, p. 1). The interview serves as “a resource for developing a richer and deeper understanding of human phenomenon ... [and] as a vehicle to develop a conversational relationship with a partner ... about the meaning of an experience” (van Manen, 1997, p. 66). It also “lets us see how the phenomenon works as a constituent of the individual’s daily experience” (McCracken, 1998, p. 10). Further, the interview stresses “the importance of context, setting, and the participant’s frame of reference” (Marshall & Rossman, 1999, p. 58). Seidman (1998) suggested that open-ended questions are most appropriate for phenomenological interviews while Creswell (1998) noted that phenomenology typically employs the long interview, augmented by researcher self-reflection.

The formal interviews were conducted by using open-ended, semi-structured questions, and lasted, on average, an hour and a half with the longest interview taking over two hours. The open-ended questions asked the interviewees for the facts of a particular situation as well as their opinions and insights (Kvale, 1996; McMillan & Schumacher, 1997; Yin, 1997), without “limiting the naturalness and relevancy of the [participants’] responses” (McMillan & Schumacher, 1997, p. 447). The semi-structured interview allowed for some structure but also provided flexibility, permitting a natural flow to the interviewees’ thought processes and

conversations (McMillan & Schumacher, 1997). Appendix C outlines the interview questions by the “what, how, when and why” and Appendix D, the sequencing of the interview questions.

The formal interviews took place during February and March, 2001 following approval from the Ethics Committee. The interviews were scheduled at a time and place selected by the participants. The interviews were held in either an on site boardroom or the participants’ offices. Before commencing the audiotaped interviews, the participants were verbally apprised of the purpose and process of the study, and how the data would be collected and used. The participants were also informed that their participation was entirely voluntary and that they could withdraw from the study at any time, without any consequences. The participants were further informed of the reason for the taping of the interview and that the information would remain confidential, with the tapes being carefully stored. The participants were then provided with a copy of the formal letter of invitation and were requested to read it.

The letter of invitation described the purpose of the research and the role of the participants, and provided assurance of the confidentiality of the information. The letter also explained to the participants that they were free to withdraw from the study at any time and that the interview tapes would be carefully stored. Appendix E provides a copy of the letter of invitation. The participants were requested to read and, should they agree, to sign the interview consent form, permitting the interviews to be used for research purposes. Appendix F provides a copy of the consent form used for the interviews. The interview participants were then provided with a copy of the transfer of learning definition to orient their thinking and to ensure that there was a commonality of understanding concerning the term when they addressed the interview questions. Following the interview, an explanation of the next steps was provided to the participants so that they were aware of the rationale, timing and expectations.

Before engaging in the interviews, I reviewed the training manuals to ensure that I was familiar with the training programs' design, content, exercises, role plays, etc.. I also made notes so that I would be a knowledgeable, active participant, with easily retrievable reference material should it be required during the interview. The participants were also requested to review their training manual prior to coming to the interview, as a means of refreshing their memory. During the second and third participant interviews, two additional questions were added to the interview questionnaire as they were important issues which emerged during those interviews. These issues pertained to changes in the department, if any, that were required to facilitate employees' transfer efforts (interview question number 15) and the main challenges that the participants faced in applying their learning efforts (interview question number 16). Both questions 15 and 16 were included in the interview questionnaire for purposes of the remaining interviews.

At the outset of the interviews, I attempted to put the interviewees at ease by being very cordial, respectful and appreciative of their participation, and by addressing any questions that they had. I was also very cognizant of my actions throughout the interview. As the research instrument I did not for example, want to lead or be perceived as leading the participants' responses, either verbally or through body gestures. In fact, I was aware of my thinking at those possible moments and refrained. I accepted their responses as stated as it was their experiences and perceptions, not mine, that I was attempting to capture. My role was one of conveying the message that their views were valuable and useful (Marshall & Rossman, 1999), and encouraging the participants to speak freely. At times however, I did provide scripted prompts, through the use of examples, to facilitate their responses and asked questions to clarify their responses such as could you clarify what you mean by or could you elaborate on that.

I was also very attentive to the participants and engaged in the interview. I established

eye contact and made notes of key points during the interviews. These notes were important as recaps for some of the participants, aiding them in their further conversations. All of the participants seemed very appreciative of the invitation to participate in the interviews and commented that they looked forward to the next stage of the research process.

*Informal interview.*

Following the completion of the formal interviews, an informal 30 minute interview was conducted with each participant. The informal interview solicited the participants' feedback on a short narrative of my interpretation of their transfer story. This narrative, which was written according to the when, how, where and why research questions, was provided to the participants prior to the informal interview for their consideration. The informal interviews, held over a coffee or over the telephone, permitted the participants to comment on areas of the narrative that required clarification, amendment or deletion, or upon reflection, further thoughts that they had concerning the formal interview.

During the informal interview, each participant was asked the following questions: 1) did I interpret your transfer experience accurately, 2) do you see places where you would like to add, delete or amend the narrative, and 3) upon reflection, is there anything that you would like to add concerning your interview or the interview process itself? Many of the participants agreed outright with the narratives while others had a few suggestions for change to either clarify or emphasize a particular point. Copious notes were made during the informal interviews and an amended narrative was provided to the participants for their further consideration. Appendix G provides a copy of the seven narratives. I also took the opportunity to probe or clarify some of the narrative material which seemed contradictory or in some instances unclear to me. Copious notes were taken in this regard but the information was not reflected in the narratives as it was

for my own clarification purposes.

*Focus group interview.*

Following the completion of the formal and informal interviews, the participants were invited by e-mail, as they had already been verbally apprised, to participate in the focus group session. The focus group was convened approximately three to four months following the first formal interview. This time period allowed for the transcription of the interviews and analysis of the themes. I was intensely steeped in the analysis of the themes throughout this three to four month period.

A number of themes and possible focus group exploratory questions resulted from the interview transcript and narrative analyses. The questions, themes, general findings and focus group proceedings were subsequently, discussed with my colleague who had participated in the development of the interview questionnaire and who, with the agreement of the participants, eventually participated in the focus group as an observer. My colleague's valuable feedback was integrated into the overall focus group proceedings.

The focus group session was scheduled at the participants' convenience and held in an on site boardroom, on a floor that none of the participants worked on to respect their anonymity. Five of the seven interviewees participated in the one and a half hour focus group. Each of the managerial, senior professional and administrative support levels were represented at the focus group. Three managers, one senior professional and one administrative support employee participated.

Before the focus group session commenced, the participants were, once again, provided with an explanation of the research, the reason for the audiotaping, and invited to read and sign the consent form, if they agreed with the terms. Appendix H provides a copy of the focus group

consent form. The intent of the focus group was to enrich the interpretation of the interview data, to validate the themes identified in the interviews and to explore new ideas (Marshall & Rossman, 1999; McMillan & Schumacher, 1997). The focus group proceedings were tape recorded and my colleague was invited to take notes regarding the discussions and group dynamics, and to make general observations. My role as the researcher was to create a collegial, participative and supportive environment, to direct the discussions, to encourage expressions of differing opinions and to probe on issues where necessary (Kvale, 1996; Mason, 1996; McMillan & Schumacher, 1997; Marshall & Rossman, 1999).

At the outset of the focus group, the participants were informed that the research sought to understand their perceptions and lived experiences with the transfer of learning. The participants were further informed that the general purpose of the focus group was to: a) explore new territories - issues which arose during the interviews for which there were no explanations or commonality of responses and b) validate the themes from the interviews. On a flip chart, the four research questions and the transfer of learning definition were outlined and discussed. The exploring new territories questions and themes were also enumerated on the flip chart, and sequentially addressed. The exploring new territories discussion addressed the two questions that arose from the seven interviews, for which further exploration was required. The participants were asked to share their perceptions and experiences related to the two issues. The validation of the themes discussion, sought the participants' validation of the themes. The participants were requested to confirm, add to or amend the theme findings. They were also asked if the findings were common to their experiences and to identify any other issues that they would like to raise.

To ensure that any power dynamics did not become an issue during the focus group, some ground rules were outlined on the flip chart, and the participants were invited to identify other

ground rules. The participants were also invited to introduce themselves by name and organization only, to ensure that the different classification levels did not impede the discussions. Further, I was prepared to invite each participant to provide his/her input, if necessary. Finally, to further facilitate the discussions, each participant was provided with a note pad and a pen to write down their ideas before responding, if they so wished.

All of the participants were engaged in a lively, respectful and insightful discussion, and everyone's voice was heard. Every participant either readily responded or was invited to respond to each aspect of the focus group. One of the participants commented, at the end of the focus group, that it was interesting to see the other people's perceptions on the subject matter. All of the participants thoughtfully shared their transfer perceptions and experiences, and offered to help me out in the future, should I require their assistance. Following the focus group, I engaged in a peer debriefing with my colleague and transcribed the audiotaped proceedings. I prepared a narrative of the discussions, and sought and incorporated my colleague's feedback. A copy of the focus group narrative is included in Appendix I.

*Researcher self-reflection journal.*

I maintained a self-reflective journal throughout the research process (Creswell, 1998; Miles & Huberman, 1994). I also retained a copy of all e-mails, either to the research participants or other involved individuals, regarding the study. The journal contained my observations, feelings, insights, reflections and thoughts about the participants, the interview process, the issues that emerged throughout the research, and my notes and thoughts regarding the training manuals. The journal also contained some of my thinking about the links between the transfer and adult learning literatures, and the findings. It also included my reflections on and thoughts about the data. Finally, the journal outlined my rationale for the decisions made

concerning the analysis and interpretation of the data (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

### *Data Analysis*

The audiotaped interviews and the focus group discussions were transcribed verbatim. I transcribed three of the seven formal interviews. A former colleague, who understood the confidentiality of the information, transcribed the four remaining interview tapes. I subsequently, transcribed the focus group discussions. Through the process of being engaged in the interviews, and listening to and relistening to all seven interview and focus group audiotapes for transcript accuracy, as well as writing the interview and focus group narratives, I developed an intimate familiarity with all seven participants' perceptions of and experiences with transfer. The development of this familiarity aided in the analysis of the data. As Merriam and Simpson (1995) suggested, in qualitative research "data are analyzed simultaneously during collection" (p. 100).

The data transcription process involved first listening to the tapes for a complete account of the interviews, transcribing the data verbatim, relistening to the tapes for transcript accuracy, sometimes up to four or five times for phrase accuracy, to ensure that the participants' meanings were as originally stated, and then rereading the transcripts for punctuation, grammar and removal of the unnecessary phrases such as the ahs and you knows. This transcription process permitted a high level of intimacy with all seven interview accounts. In fact, I reached a point where I knew how each participant had responded to the individual questions.

The data underwent further analysis as I prepared the participants' narratives. The writing of the narratives involved my repeated return to the transcripts, my journal notes and my interview notes. I read and reread, and referred back to each as a whole, making notes, and thinking about and reflecting on all of the information in order to get at the essence of what was

said. The writing of the narratives further involved considering how to organize them, deciding to write them on the basis of the four research questions to facilitate the eventual interpretation of the data, returning to each individual's transcript to interpret their statements, and then selecting the relevant descriptions from the interview texts, including verbatim accounts to let the participants' voices be heard. My own concepts and those of the transfer and adult learning literatures were not imposed on the data at this point in time.

Further analysis was undertaken in preparing for the focus group. The focus group preparation involved a process of reading and rereading the individual interview transcripts, the interview narratives, the participants' feedback on the narratives, my journal notes and my interview notes. Through this process, I developed an even deeper familiarity and intimacy with the interview data. In addition to this, I thought about and reflected on the data, and made notes with respect to common themes and issues. By repeatedly returning to the transcripts and my notes, common descriptions or themes began to emerge, as did issues requiring further exploration. The themes and issues were discussed with my colleague, as were my reflections and notes on the interviews and narratives. Seven themes and two issues which required discussion and exploration at the focus group session emerged from the data analysis. Feedback on the eighth theme, when transfer entered the participants' learning experience, was not solicited at the focus group as the participants' responses were deemed to have been clearly enumerated, not requiring further discussion or confirmation.

Following the focus group session, the audiotaped proceedings were transcribed verbatim by me. The focus group proceedings underwent a similar transcription and narrative writing process as the formal interview transcripts and narratives. The focus group transcript, for example, was read and reread for accuracy to ensure that the participants' meanings were as

originally stated and then reread for punctuation and grammar, and removal of the unnecessary phrases such as the ahs and you knows. The focus group flip chart discussion notes were also transcribed verbatim as were the flip chart proceedings. The focus group narrative was written through a process of repeatedly referring to the transcription, discussion notes and my journal notes. There was a constant going back and forth between the data sources. Through these processes and my reflections on the data, I developed an intimate familiarity with the data and was able to identify the essence of the group's experiences. The writing of the focus group narrative further involved selecting the relevant participant descriptions and including verbatim accounts to let the participants' voices echo throughout the text. Once again, my own concepts and those of the transfer research and adult learning theories were not imposed on the data at this point in time.

The analysis of the interview and focus group data was, therefore, undertaken through a process of reading and rereading, organizing the data, identifying the participants' meaning statements, and grouping the statements into meaning units (Creswell, 1998). The data were analyzed through a process of reduction, analysis of specific statements and themes, and a search for possible meaning, in keeping with the phenomenological research approach (Creswell, 1998).

#### *Data Interpretation*

The aim of phenomenology is "to transform lived experience into a textual expression of its essence - in such a way that the effect of the text is at once a reflective re-living and a reflective appropriation of something meaningful: a notion by which a reader is powerfully animated in his or her own lived experience" (van Manen, 1997, p. 36). In phenomenology, the data interpretation is made by the continued reading and rereading of the data, and ensuring that one's presuppositions are in check. Such a process leads to "the practical understanding of the

meanings and actions” (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 8). The data in this study were interpreted by constantly reading and rereading the texts, reflecting on the texts, giving them order and interpreting them. An intuitive understanding of the texts as a whole and their different parts were gained by this process, and an interpretation of the data was made (Creswell, 1998; Kvale, 1996; Seidman, 1998).

In interpreting the data, the data were first examined for meaning units or themes. A theme being “a fuller description of the structure of a lived experience” (van Manen, 1997, p. 92). The themes recurred as commonalities or possible commonalities in the individual interview and narrative texts. Following the preliminary identification of the themes and receiving their confirmation at the focus group, the task became one of holding “on to these themes by lifting appropriate phrases or by capturing in singular statements the main thrust of the meaning of the themes” (p. 93). The task of interpretation subsequently became one of developing the essence or the structure of the meaning of the interview texts.

The interpretation of the data also involved the process of developing an intimate familiarity with the data, referring to the individual texts to identify possible themes and then referring to all of the texts, as a whole, for recurring themes or possible commonalities to yet again, return to the individual texts as described in the data analysis section. Kvale (1996) described this process as “the continuous back and forth process between the parts and the whole that follows from the hermeneutical circle” (p. 48). While the hermeneutic circle can continue indefinitely, interpretation “ends in practice when one has reached a sensible meaning” (p. 47).

The interpretation also included the process of permitting the study participants to review their narratives, and clarify their meaning statements and my interpretation of their transfer experience. The interpretation process further involved a discussion with my colleague

concerning the focus group narrative, to ensure that the focus group participants' meanings were properly captured. The transcript themes which emerged from both the interviews and the focus group became "the objects of reflection in follow-up hermeneutic conversations in which both the researcher[,] ... the interviewee[s and a peer] collaborate[d]" (van Manen, 1997, p. 99).

Following the data analysis and interpretation stages, I had an opportunity to engage in a further interpretation of the texts. This interpretation was in light of the transfer of learning and adult learning literatures.

### **Trustworthiness of the Research**

Marshall & Rossman (1999), in discussing the subject of research standards, noted that "all research must respond to the canons of quality - criteria against which the trustworthiness of the project can be evaluated" (p. 191). According to Creswell (1998), the standards of quality are the criteria by which the researcher and readers will view the study after it is completed, while standards of verification refer to the "process that occurs throughout the data collection, analysis, and report writing of a study" (p. 194).

The standards of quality refer to whether the: (a) design, data collection and analysis techniques were described in sufficient detail and competently applied, (b) researcher's assumptions and epistemological stance were explicitly stated, (c) data were robust and the study was situated in a scholarly context for example, by employing and discussing respected theoretical explanations, (d) results inform or improve practice, and (e) participants' confidentiality, privacy and truth telling were protected (Creswell, 1998; Marshall & Rossman, 1999).

In addressing the standards of verification, the credibility or the criteria by which the research will be judged and the transferability of the findings to another setting or group of

people must be considered. The issue of the dependability of the study's findings, which seeks to ensure that the participants' views and not the researcher's biases or prejudices are reflected, and the confirmability of study whereby similar study results would be obtained by another researcher in the same context (Marshall & Rossman, 1999), must also be considered.

Credibility refers to the "correctness ... of a description, conclusion, explanation, interpretation, or other sort of account" (Maxwell, 1996, p. 87). It addresses the "issue of the inquirer providing assurances of the fit between respondents' views of their life ways and the inquirer's reconstruction and representation of same" (Schwandt, 1997, p. 164). The process of credibility ensures that the research is "well grounded, justifiable, strong and convincing" (Kvale, 1996, p. 236). The study's parameters, the researcher's own perspectives and a demonstration of what controls were applied to counter those perspectives, and how the data were interpreted should be provided (Marshall & Rossman, 1999; Mason, 1996).

Transferability refers to "an act of reasoning from the observed to the unobserved, from a specific instance to all instances believed to be like the instance in question" (Schwandt, 1997, p. 57). Transferability addresses the question of whether the findings are "useful to others in a similar situation, with similar research questions or questions of practice"? (Marshall & Rossman, 1999, p. 193). A full description of the sample, settings and processes; a definition of the research's scope, boundaries and concepts of the original theoretical framework; and how the data were collected and analyzed should be provided (Marshall & Rossman, 1999; Miles & Huberman, 1994).

Dependability pertains to "establishing the truth of an account or interpretation of social phenomenon" (Schwandt, 1997, p. 137) and refers to "the process of the inquiry and the inquirer's responsibility for ensuring that the process was logical, traceable, and documented"

(p. 164). Qualitative research does not claim to be replicable (Marshall & Rossman, 1999) but a complete account of how the data were collected, recorded and analyzed (Kvale, 1996; Miles & Huberman, 1994), demonstrates to the reader that the research was conducted in a “thorough, careful, honest and accurate” manner (Mason, 1996, p. 146).

Confirmability addresses the question “do the conclusions depend on “the subjects and conditions of the inquiry”, rather than on the inquirer?” (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 278) or in other words, “can the study findings be confirmed by another?” (Marshall & Rossman, 1999, p. 194). A record of the study’s methods and procedures; how the data were collected, transformed and interpreted; the researcher’s assumptions, values and biases; and the design decisions and their rationale should all be described, easily retrievable and traceable by others (Marshall & Rossman, 1999; Miles & Huberman, 1994).

Verification procedures or measures that can be taken to assist in drawing sound, justifiable and convincing conclusions include establishing an interview relationship that is based on trust; checking the data for distortions that may have been introduced by either the researcher or the participants; triangulating the data; and weighing the evidence. They also include debriefing peers or having peers review the material; looking for negative or outlier cases; clarifying researcher biases; checking for rival explanations; conducting member checks; and describing the data in a rich and thick manner (Creswell, 1998; Kvale, 1996; Marshall & Rossman, 1999; Miles & Huberman, 1994).

The trustworthiness of the data depends on the researcher continually checking, questioning and interpreting the findings. The “more attempts at verification an interpretation has survived, the stronger it stands” (Kvale, 1996, p. 241). As Kvale (1996) posited, the trustworthiness of research “comes to depend on the quality of craftsmanship during

investigation, continually checking, questioning, and theoretically interpreting the findings” (p. 241), with the research procedures transparent and results evident. van Manen (1997) suggested that “a good phenomenological description ... resonates with our sense of lived life. ... Is validated by lived experience and validates lived experience” (p. 27). The description “persuades the reader of the trustworthiness of the findings” (Merriam & Simpson, 1995, p. 101).

Sources of this research’s trustworthiness included data that were rich, “detailed and complete enough that [they] provide[d] a full and revealing picture of what [was] going on” (Maxwell, 1996, p. 95). The informal interview narratives and the focus group narrative on which the participants’ and a colleague’s feedback were sought respectively, provided other sources for identifying any credibility threats, such as my own biases and assumptions, and flaws in my logic or interpretation. The audiotaped formal interviews and the verbatim accounts, as well as my engaging a colleague in a peer debriefing session further addressed the problem of interpretation. In addition, a statement of my biases, and my keeping a self-reflective journal added to establishing the research’s trustworthiness by maintaining a complete account of the sample, settings and processes, and how the data were collected, recorded, analyzed and interpreted (Kvale, 1996; Miles & Huberman, 1994).

The data interpretation also underwent a number of verification attempts and the data were continually checked, questioned and theoretically interpreted throughout the study (Kvale, 1996). Finally, every effort was made to conduct the research in a “thorough, careful, honest and accurate” manner (Mason, 1996, p. 146).

In final analysis, one could argue that my being an employee in the federal government department in question and knowing some of the participants somewhat, was a limitation of the research. The research design, with the audiotaped interviews and focus group session, as well as

the interview and focus group narratives, which were subject to my colleague's and the participants' challenge, refinement and further commentary, ensured that the data were representative of the participants' realities, not the researcher's.

In summary, this hermeneutic phenomenological study sought to understand seven federal government employees' perceptions of and experiences with transfer. These employees, from the managerial, professional and administrative support categories, openly shared their lived experiences in terms of what their transfer experiences were, how they experienced transfer, when transfer entered their learning experience and why they believed that transfer had occurred.

This research employed a stringent selection process to ensure for example, that the employees had actually transferred their learning to their workplace activities, and that they had voluntarily come to the research. The data collection stage involved formal, informal and focus group interviews, and maintenance of a self-reflective journal. The data analysis and interpretation processes were also quite stringent, involving participant and peer challenges, and the continual checking, questioning and interpreting of the findings. The research approach and design were carefully developed to ensure the trustworthiness of the research, and every effort was made to conduct the research in a "thorough, careful, honest and accurate" manner (Mason, 1996, p. 146). Chapter 4 explores and describes the participants' lived accounts of their transfer experiences.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### Findings

This study sought to address four research questions. The overarching research question was what were the employees' lived experiences with transfer? The subquestions were how did the employees experience transfer; when did transfer enter their learning experience; and why did they believe that transfer had occurred? This study also sought to understand the interplay between the three primary transfer sources - the individuals' characteristics, training program's design and development features, and organizational climate characteristics. Finally, this research sought to understand whether the adult learning theories were well positioned to bring a different perspective to the transfer subject. In addressing these questions, this hermeneutic phenomenological research entered the participants' field of perceptions and explored their transfer experiences through conversational interviews, narratives and a focus group session (Creswell, 1998).

Eight major themes emerged from the data analysis. These themes are: 1) a desire to learn, 2) how transfer occurred, 3) discourse, 4) application of the learning to life's situations, 5) when transfer entered the learning experience, 6) learning by doing, 7) an open and supportive culture, and 8) the main challenges to transfer. Themes one and two can generally be categorized as the individuals' characteristics, three, four, five and six as the training program's design and development features, and seven and eight as the organizational climate characteristics. The themes will be categorized in this manner throughout this text.

In approaching the writing of this chapter, I "cobble[d] together" the participants' transfer stories (Lincoln & Denzin, 1998, p. 425), by blending their experiences with my analysis, giving expression to "the inner life" of their stories (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998b, p. 23). This chapter

weaves the participants' perceptions of and experiences with the transfer of learning into a transfer story; a story that is predicated on the participants' own voices, providing an appreciation of the depth and richness of their experiences.

To understand the particular context within which the participants acted upon and were influenced (Maxwell, 1996), it will be recalled that John and Joseph, senior officers, and Bonnie, a junior officer, all participated in the Power of Communications, a two day course; Jared, a manager, and Blake, an administrative support officer, participated in the People-Oriented Management, a three day course; and Janice and Susan, both managers, participated in the Leadership training, a ten day course (five days on leadership skills and five days on the machinery of government).

It is important to note that the participants are provided with a pseudoname and the focus group participants are identified in the male gender, to respect their anonymity and confidentiality. It is also important to reiterate at this juncture that for purposes of this study, transfer was defined as the knowledge, skills or attitudes that an individual gains from a training program that are effectively applied in their workplace efforts. This application results in the employees' enhanced job performance. Finally, before engaging in a discussion of the what of the participants' transfer stories, and the when and how of those stories, it is important to establish the why of their transfer experiences. From the participants' perspective, did they transfer the course content to their work activities and personal lives, and why did they believe that to be so? The following section addresses the participants' accounts of whether and why they believed that transfer occurred, and whether their transfer efforts resulted in their enhanced job performance.

### **Did Transfer Occur?**

In examining the participants' transfer experiences, positive transfer occurred as all of the participants, with the exception of Joseph, cited examples of the application of knowledge, skills or attitudes acquired in the training program to their work activities. As will be recalled, a formal program evaluation to assess the anticipated training program outcomes or the settings in which the participants were expected to apply their newly acquired knowledge, skills or attitudes for example, was not conducted to determine whether the participants transferred their learning to their workplace activities. Rather, transfer was assessed by requesting the participants to cite examples of "explicit changes in their professional practice", through open-ended questions (Guskey, 2000, p. 187).

The use of self reports in assessing transfer is a commonly accepted practice (Garavaglia, 1993; Guskey, 2000; Kirkpatrick, 1987). Garavaglia (1993) argued that "trainees can be accurate, sensitive judges of their own achievement levels in their self-reports" (p. 66). Further, a three to six month period of time had lapsed between the interviewees' participation in the respective courses and the research interviews. This time period was again, in keeping with commonly held practice. Kirkpatrick (1987) posited that a "post training appraisal [of transfer] should be made three months or more after the training program so that trainees have an opportunity to put into practice what they have learned" (p. 313). It was, therefore, believed that the study participants had "enough time for a change in behavior to take place" (Kirkpatrick, 1996, p. 57).

The following section describes the participants' accounts of their application efforts in their work, personal and community lives, and whether transfer resulted in their enhanced on-the-job performance. A summary of the findings then follows.

*Transfer in their Work Lives?*

As a result of the prescreening interviews, the majority of the participants cited examples of the application of knowledge, a skill and/or an attitude in their work activities. The majority further believed that their transfer efforts resulted in enhancements in their professional practices. Two of the participants however, noted that the courses simply reinforced what they already knew. One of these participants believed that this reinforcement had, none the less, resulted in positive changes in his professional practices while the other participant was unsure if transfer had occurred at all. Let's now hear, in the participants' own voices, their transfer accounts, as captured in the interview statements and narrative summaries.

*Knowledge, skills and/or attitudes.*

Susan, one of the managers who participated in the Leadership Training course, described her transfer of learning as the application of knowledge, skills and attitudes. Susan for example, recounted positive changes in her relations with her staff and coworkers, particularly in situations requiring her conflict resolution skills. She also noted that she had formed a relationship, as recommended during the course, with a mentor from the executive ranks who would support, guide and assist her in achieving her career development goals. Susan explained however, that perhaps the biggest behavioral change in her professional practice was in her managerial style, particularly concerning her changed attitudes towards her staff and the application of new knowledge. She recollected:

I have a problem with this (perfectionism) and this was one of my goals during the course. I remember saying to my boss I can not work with incompetent people. I stay away from that. ... If they're not perfectionists and if they don't pay attention to the work they're providing, don't ask me to accept this or ... to recognize their work.

Through[out] that week and I know this is ... a strength but it's a weakness at the same time, I learned ... that nobody is perfect and I can not expect somebody else ... to achieve the same level as I do. So this is something I started. ... Already, on two different projects I let go of a few things which [were] ... details. ... I'm working on this but this is because of the leadership development course.

Janice, also a manager who participated in the Leadership Training course, cited the application of new knowledge concerning strategic planning, new people skills and changed attitudes concerning her staff. She explained:

(The leadership course made) me a smarter person. I know more about what I'm talking about. Now when I do my strategic plan, ... I am going to ... [feel] more comfortable with it. ... Its based on how things work (for example, the government budget, planning and decision making processes). ... It gives me more confidence. ... I know that people [also] appreciate me more. ... I have this very good feeling about my team. ... I realized during the course that I was listening a lot to them but I wasn't telling them a lot. So now what I do is every time I get a piece of information, I forward it on to them. ... So that (course) changed my perceptions. ... [Also], now when somebody walks into my office, ... I make a conscious effort to put away the computer and not answer the phone (in order to be present to their needs). So, that (course) changed my perceptions.

Janice added that she too had developed a relationship with a mentor and assumed the role of a "coach" with her staff. She noted that she was now more patient with her staff, giving them the time that they needed to do their work, and more accepting of their ways.

John, a senior officer who participated in the Power of Communications course, noted that his transfer of learning involved enhancements in his communications knowledge and skills,

and changes in his perceptions. John recounted that subsequent to the training, he spent “more time listening to others”, trying to understand where they were coming from, watchful of “the non verbal language and [trying] to capture a little quicker and with more precision that kind of feeling that they are trying to give me as a message”. He added that he also attempted to clarify the intent of what his colleagues were communicating “by giving feedback to the person” and not “jumping to conclusions as quickly as [he had] before”. These changes in John’s communications knowledge, skills and attitudes were key considerations for the type of work that he did as his work involved “a lot of discussions with employees and also with managers”.

Bonnie, a junior officer who participated in the Power of Communications course, also noted positive changes in her knowledge, skills and attitudes. Bonnie recounted:

what I really wanted to get out of the communications course ... was to be able to deal with people. I guess not irrate people but difficult to deal with people better, and I think probably I can do that now. ... To listen to them better, [to] not tune them out when they get upset and to just stay calm. ... I’d like to think that I’m a better communicator [now], ... a better listener. Giv[ing] other people the chance to talk and mak[ing] sure that they know [I am] listening.

Bonnie added that the course also helped her to overcome her shyness. She noted that she now voiced her opinion more assertively in meetings and realized she could not change people but she could change her perceptions of and reactions to them.

Blake, an administrative support officer who participated in the People Oriented Management Program (POMP), believed that his transfer of learning primarily involved his enhanced self-awareness, “finding out where ... I stand in my [Myers Briggs] profile. ... I think knowing myself and my Myers Briggs, my personality ... type”. He added that he too was now

more patient with staff members and noted “I listen to the person, I am empathetic [and] see what I can do”. He also mentioned that he was more comfortable in dealing with workplace conflicts, and more assertive in asking for his supervisor’s support in his decision making and in carrying out those decisions. Blake recounted “before I had a hard time with that. So, now I say [to my supervisor] I need your support. ... I think this is a management problem and I need your support. I ask more for support”. Blake’s transfer involved the application of communications knowledge and skills, and changed perceptions about himself.

*Course participation as a reinforcement.*

Unlike the other research participants, both Jared and Joseph regarded their course participation as largely a reinforcement of what they already knew. Jared, a manager who participated in the POMP, described his learning efforts as “to a large extent, a reinforcement of what I already knew”. He explained that the course brought that “knowing forward in [his] consciousness”, resulting in changes in his professional practices around “communications, around listening, providing the opportunities for people to speak their piece and to listen to what they’re saying”. He added that he was also now more aware of needing “to be clearer in the message” he conveyed when writing correspondence for the Minister of the department. “Stuff I had before but it was re-enforced by the course and brought out”.

Finally, Joseph, a senior officer who participated in the Power of Communications course, noted that he could “not cite specific examples” of application. He recalled that he learned how to “write for a purpose [and] communicate for a purpose” but explained “I might have (applied what I learned) but at the moment I can’t say that I did consciously. ... I think I internalized it”. Joseph continued to explain “I find most of these courses, in my case, probably the new material for me is 20% or so, it’s not 100%. ... The other 80% they’re using to build up

the course. The 20% or so ... [is] maybe new information, for me new knowledge”. Like Jared, the training program reinforced what Joseph already knew. Joseph noted that he read a lot about various subject matter and recounted “what happens on most of these courses, most of the things I know they exist but they’re just sort of a reinforcement of material for me”. Joseph concluded, “most of [the course content] was what I knew but in a scattered manner. ... [The course] put it in a focused way for me”.

### *Transfer in their Personal Lives?*

The participants also cited examples of the application of the course content in their personal lives. For some of the participants, that application was in their family relations or community work. For others, it was in both their family relations and community work. The following section addresses the participants’ application efforts in their family relations, community work, and in both their family relations and community work, respectively.

#### *Family relations.*

Both John and Janice noted positive changes in their attitudes and communications skills with family members. Joseph, while citing family relations, did not however, believe that his communications with family members had changed. He stated that his “communications is always transparent”. John however, provided the most succinct example of positive changes in family relations, as follows:

I had a discussion with my teenage daughter. The course gave me some new ideas ... to try and have a different type of discussion [with her]. For example, what this course, what the trainer would ... [say] very often is you have the right to be unhappy, you have the right to not be pleased by a comment, you have the right to ... have things done in a certain way. ... The other people also have the right to do it the way they want. It makes

you reflect on a lot of things [and] quite often [I'll] say well, maybe I'm asking too much.

... It is your right, now the other person also has the right to be unhappy and so on and so forth, but what this does is bring the whole new message that you both have rights, now talk about it, come to some kind of understanding. Just by the fact that you are talking about it with others will [help them] understand your problem and you can also try to understand their problem and eventually be able to get to [some] middle ground.

Janice similarly recollected that the course "made" her more "sensitive and objective", improving her relationships with her loved ones. She recounted that she applied some of the coaching theory and skills with her children, and explained "my listening skills and my open minded skills have increased, improved with my sons. ... I find myself sitting back more and thinking more because I'm coaching [them]".

#### *Community work.*

Blake and Jared both described the application of their learning efforts in their community work. Blake stated "I am involved in the administrative committee for the church. ... I have the whole plan laid out and the time chart. ... I learned a lot [during the course] that I can apply to them too". He explained that the course also helped him "to understand working in groups, [the] dynamics of groups, [and] working with different characters". Jared, on the other hand, believed that "some of the [learned] skills" would be useful in his service "on the Board of Directors of our sailing club. ... Just trying to make things happen in that context".

#### *Application efforts in both their family relations and community work.*

Finally, Susan and Bonnie described the application of the course content in both their family relations and community work. Susan best captured the situation, as follows:

I think there is also [a] wisdom in this. ... I'm more attentive, listen more actively. I had

this before but I think it has to be practiced a bit more and I tried to transfer this to my son[s]. ... It's not necessarily easy because they have so much to say, their rights, they're late teenagers. ... I've noticed that they have learned. They have started to learn about respecting [the] opinions of others.

Susan added, "I think it takes a long time to practice active listening and I do this with the scouts too because I'm a scout master. ... I think this is good not just for the children but [also for] the Board of Directors. ... I mentioned that I took the course and I talked about that at the meeting because we want the parents to listen to the kids". Bonnie similarly noted that "this type of course involves more than just your workplace. I mean being a communicator is something you do everyday and every time you are interacting with people. So, definitely, I think its helped [in my volunteer work and] I guess even with my children". Bonnie explained that, as a result of the course, she listened to her children more and gave "them the opportunity [to speak] without voicing [her] opinion too quickly".

#### *Enhanced Job Performance?*

The participants were invited to share their perceptions of whether their transfer efforts resulted in their enhanced job performance, and to explain why they believed that to be so. When sharing their views on these matters, the participants' responses varied from minimally enhanced, to difficult to say, to made a positive contribution, to absolutely. The following section sequentially addresses these responses.

#### *Minimally enhanced.*

John believed that his transfer efforts resulted in his enhanced job performance "but [only] to a very low level". John explained that "because of the lack of [practice] time [during the program], ... to really feel comfortable with what you're hearing, with what you've been

taught, ... the chances of applying it [upon your return to the workplace] are not very great". He added "I suppose ... [the course gave] me another tool if you want in my bag of tricks but it's only one of many. ... To say that it has really improved the way that I do things, to a very, very small level".

*Difficult to say.*

Blake and Joseph both believed that it was difficult to say if it was the course itself that enhanced their job performance. Blake explained "I can not say it enhanced [it] to a high degree ... and then again, it's hard to say because of everything that goes on. All of the distractions around you, its hard to discern if it was the information from the course, ... HR that gave me this idea or [someone else]". Blake also noted that he attended many courses and seminars, and read widely. As a result, he could not isolate what he learned on the POMP from those other activities. Joseph similarly, recollected that "probably some of the things that I picked up and internalized, and I read may have [enhanced my performance], but if you ask me to dissect my thinking process, I won't be able to do it. ... If this was the thing that really did it, ... that really becomes a judgement call. ... I can't tell you". Joseph, similar to Blake, added that he could not attribute any job performance enhancements to the course alone as he too read extensively about varied subject matter.

*Positive contribution.*

Bonnie and Jared believed that their respective courses did indeed make a positive contribution to their job performance. Bonnie recounted "I think it has enhanced my ability to be able to communicate in the office. I'm a shy person and I think being able to voice opinions and to be able to speak [up] at meetings is really important. And I think it (the course) has helped. ... I am more likely to speak up when there's a lot of people around which is something that I had

not always done". She noted however, "I think its partially due to the course and partially just experience. The older you get, ... the more apt you are to speak [out] but I think the course did help". Jared similarly recalled that the course made "a positive contribution" but questioned "how do you measure that?" He recounted "I feel that ... the course was worth while. It re-enforced areas, it refreshed me in certain areas, it gave me some things that I thought about applying. ... On [the] whole, I feel that its probably helped [enhance my performance]".

*Absolutely.*

Finally, for Susan and Janice their transfer efforts absolutely resulted in their enhanced job performance. Susan remarked "absolutely, I'm positive about that" while Janice's response was a resounding "definitely!" Susan believed that her job performance was enhanced because she was "more inclined to learn more" and wanted "to know more about leadership, ... not [only] to become senior management but it is good in my working environment". She explained that she realized "there is no end to this [learning]". Susan appeared ready to continue on with her learning and application efforts, to make a difference in the leadership field. Janice, on the other hand, recalled that the course made her "a better person, a smarter person". She added she was a "more confident" person who was "contributing to a better day on the job" for her staff and concluded "this training helped me. ... I am not the rock of Gibraltar. ... It's ok to be weak and it's ok to have feelings, and I think that it's helping people to see me [more positively]".

In summary, all of the participants with the exception of one, cited examples of the application of knowledge, skills and/or attitudes learned in their respective learning activities to their work activities and personal lives. The participants, therefore, appeared to have translated their learning into changes in their professional practices. While the majority of the participants believed that their transfer efforts resulted in improvements in their job performance, they were

not unanimous as to the degree of those enhancements. The degree of their enhanced job performance ranged from minimally to absolutely enhanced. Table 3 provides a summary of whether the participants transferred their learning and whether their transfer efforts resulted in their enhanced job performance, by participant.

**Table 3**  
**The Participants' Transfer of Learning**

<b>Participant/ Variable</b>	<b>John</b>	<b>Jared</b>	<b>Bonnie</b>	<b>Janice</b>	<b>Susan</b>	<b>Blake</b>	<b>Joseph</b>
<b>Transfer at work</b>	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Uncertain
<b>Transfer in personal life</b>	Family	Community	Family & Community	Family	Family & Community	Community	Difficult to say
<b>Enhanced Job Performance</b>	Minimal	Positive contribution	Positive contribution	Absolutely	Definitely	Difficult to say	Difficult to say

Now that it has been established that the majority of the participants did transfer their learning to their workplace activities and that these efforts resulted in enhancements in their job performance, the next section of this chapter addresses the what of the participants' lived accounts of transfer, as well as the when and how of their transfer experiences. These lived experiences, as captured in the eight major themes and clustered according to the individuals' characteristics, training program's design and development features, and organizational climate characteristics, are described in the following section. The possible interrelationships between the three primary transfer sources and an overall summary of the findings are then presented.

### **Individuals' Characteristics**

This section of the chapter describes the participants' transfer stories as they relate to the two themes which cluster around the individuals' characteristics. These two themes are the

desire to learn and how transfer occurred. A summary of the individuals' characteristics findings then follows.

### *A Desire To Learn*

The desire to learn theme relates to the participants' motivations, course expectations, attitudes and skills that were important to their transfer efforts. The following section describes the participants' motivations and course expectations, and the identified attitudes and skills, respectively.

#### *Their Motivations and Course Expectations*

The participants' motivations for participating in the course were varied, multifaceted and differed among those who participated in the same course. Their motivations can generally be characterized as their managers' suggestion, a negative experience, a career decision and the course's reputation. This section sequentially addresses these motivational factors, as well as whether the participants' course expectations were met.

##### *Managers' suggestion.*

John recounted that his course participation was precipitated by his manager's suggestion, during a performance feedback discussion. John recalled however, that he had his own motivations for participating in the Power of Communications course (POC). John viewed the POC as an opportunity to improve his communications, both within and outside of the workplace. He explained "communications is an area that is particularly difficult [for me]. ... I always feel that I'm not expressing myself well or I'm missing the point ... [when] the other person is trying to communicate to me". As a result of participating in the course, John was hopeful that he would "be able to read the body language, ... think outside that box [e.g., his

background and the way he perceived things], ... receive information better and ... deliver the message better". When asked if his course expectations were met, John replied "to an extent" as he had picked "up a few tips ... or ways of doing things" but reiterated that "two days is not enough time to experiment and apply", leaving him "not quite confident enough to really go back and apply" his learning in his work activities.

Blake and Susan were, like John, initially motivated by their managers' suggestion. They too however, had their own particular motivations for participating in the course. Blake's motivations related to an opportunity to enhance his communications skills and to learn "how to address employee disciplinary problems that we were having. There were a lot of examples that were going to be given [during the course] from elsewhere [in this regard]. So it (the course) could help us with some of the problems that we were facing [in the workplace] at that time". Blake felt that it was "hard to say" if his course expectations were met as "the process of defending disciplinary action and poor performance is long" and noted that the work demands often impede that process. Susan, on the other hand, recounted that her manager asked if "I would have an interest in this [course] because he would like to nominate me [for the program, to which I responded] yes, yes, I'm interested!" Susan was however, further motivated to participate in the course by her desire to "enhance her leadership knowledge and skills, ... to share experiences with other course participants" and to put what she "learned into action". Susan believed that her course expectations were met. Finally, while Joseph was not initially motivated by his manager, like John, he sought to "improve [his] communications skills". Joseph believed that his course expectations were met.

*A negative experience.*

Bonnie was motivated to participate in the POC by a negative work experience and by her desire to generally enhance her everyday communications. She explained “I thought that it (the course) would really help me to deal with difficult people. ... I’ve had a particular experience just before that, and I thought well, if I could have handled it better. ... But I thought generally [that] the course would help me in my everyday communications in the office as well I guess, [as] outside the office”. Bonnie’s expectations “generally were met”.

*A career decision.*

Janice’s motivation to participate in the course was based on her desire to make a career decision. Janice remarked:

Well, there is a very personal reason. ... I’m not so sure ... how I’m going to direct my career. I don’t know if I want to get into a higher position or just stay where I am. ... So it (the departmental e-mail announcing the course) made me think ok, so what do I do next? Do I get into a training [program] to see if I want to further this career of mine or [do] I want to stay put and be guided? Because you have a choice, its either you report to somebody you don’t respect or you decide ok, I’m going to take it on because I can do a better job than this person, and get the training and move on. I’ve never been ... a good follower so I decided to take the course to see if what I learned there [helped in my decision making].

Janice added that she also sought to further develop her self-knowledge and her knowledge of how the government operates. She believed that her course expectations were met.

*The course's reputation.*

Jared's motivation was based on hearing that "it was a good course ... and know[ing] that ... [the course] is being actively promoted in the department". From Jared's perspective, the course would provide him with "a good heads up on what other managers in the department were getting", including how to deal with employee performance problems. He added that "at first [he] thought there might be something there to learn or at least if not something new, something that would reinforce what [he had] heard and seen elsewhere [in] similar kinds of courses in the past". Jared, therefore, regarded the course "as a refresher as much as anything" and noted that his course expectations were met to an extent. Jared recollected that while he did receive "good tips ... about giving a poor performance [feedback]" and how to communicate more effectively with his staff members, he was hopeful to have dealt "more effectively" with difficult and low performing employees, as a result of the course.

*Their Attitudes and Skills*

The participants identified a number of attitudes and skills which they believed were necessary to facilitate their transfer of learning. These attitudes and skills can generally be characterized as the learners' open mindedness, positive attitude and ability to reflect. They are further characterized as the learners' interest in and choice of training program, having course expectations or learning goals, and possessing flexibility, listening, note taking and risk taking skills. Finally, they include the learners proactively looking for application opportunities and possessing self discipline. The following section presents the general characteristics, and the latter two attitudes and skills, respectively.

*General characteristics.*

John believed that in order for an employee to learn and transfer, the learner must enter the training program “with an open mind, ... be adaptable, ... flexible, ... listen [to others], ... reflect ... [and possess] a certain propensity for innovation where they really want to try it to see if it works ... in [their] work, or family, or ... life [in general]”. Bonnie too noted the importance of the learners’ open mindedness and added “a positive attitude, ... [and having] certain [learning] expectations”. From Janice’s perspective, the learners’ abilities and skills that facilitated transfer related to an awareness “that [they] don’t know it all ... [and they] have to listen [to others]”. Janice explained “you have to listen and you have to realize that a good part of your learning will not come from your teachers, it will come from your peers, from people [who] are with you on that course”. Janice too, recollected that “open mindedness is the key” to learning and transfer.

Like Bonnie, Susan suggested the importance of a positive attitude. Susan added that learners must be “really open and eager to learn and to evolve, [have] an interest in the subject matter”, reflect on their learning and application efforts, and take good notes during the course. Joseph similarly suggested an “interest in the subject matter” and choice of training program. He added that with “a positive attitude, you’re going to learn better than otherwise”. Blake, in addition to open mindedness, good listening skills, and an interest in and choice of the course, suggested that the learners must want “to get out of ... [the course] with 3% more than [they presently] know”. Like Susan he also emphasized “note taking” and added that an interest in “group participation ... and practice” opportunities were also important.

Finally, Jared provided a very good summary of the attitudes and skills identified by the

other participants. He recounted:

I think you need to be open to new ideas, new techniques, new approaches. If you're not, if you go on a course with preset ideas that are not going to change then of course no course will be much good. ... You have to have the willingness to be flexible. ... You either have to have good recall of the [course] material ... or you have to have the organizational skills to go back and review it. ... Perhaps it needs a certain amount of courage to change the way that you do things. ... You have to be willing to take risks. ... So, courage, flexibility and risk taking.

*Proactively looking for application opportunities.*

The participants described the learners proactively looking for application opportunities as the learners possessing an attitude of can do. They further described this characteristic as the learners possessing the skills to question and make the linkages between what they learned during the course, and the application of that learning in their work and personal lives.

Bonnie for example, posited that it was important during the course to be “ready to receive something new, something different, and then to apply that to your everyday life”. She added, upon return to the workplace, if the learners “don’t apply [their learning] then I think it is usually because of personal reasons. Maybe the work place has something to do with it but you have to want to bring it back and apply what you have learned. Maybe in some settings it’s not that type of environment, it’s not conducive to that, but I think generally you can bring back things and apply them”. Janice described the learners’ desire to proactively look for application opportunities as one of reflecting during and following the course on “this I’m good at so I’ll enhance this or that I’m really bad at [so] I will have to change this”. She added that the learners

should return to the workplace cognizant of what needs to be done and constantly think “now you have to do this!”

Susan very matter of factly stated that not only do the learners need to “be really open and eager to learn” but they must also “put [that learning] into practice” in the different contexts of their life - professional, personal and social. Blake similarly recounted that during a course, it is important for learners to relate the course materials to themselves and their work activities, and to question what they might do differently. Blake explained:

“I think I related a lot of what I was seeing [during the course] to what I had experienced and [I] tr[ie]d to position myself ... with what was ... being shown to us. ... [I questioned] what else I could have done that I didn't do ... as I was learning some of the techniques. [I also questioned] how I could have done some things better, ... what I could have done more effectively”.

Upon return to the workplace, Blake believed that learners must look for “things that are applicable to [their] work ... [and noted] basically, it's each individual's attitude. ... They have to see that it's a changing time right now, a changing world, a changing environment, not only globally but things are changing here”. Joseph similarly believed that employees, upon their return to the office, should discuss their training and possible application opportunities with their colleagues or managers, and participate in a “sort of follow up [session] two weeks later, ... [to discuss] how [the material] is being applied”.

From John's perspective, it was important for learners, during the course, to constantly question “how it (the course material) applies to [their] particular situation. ... [They] need to ... [possess an] attitude where [they're] thinking, will this have application, ... does it actually work

in my work and personal life?” Finally, Jared similarly suggested that the learners must “be analytical about the work [they] are doing and look for opportunities for where to make the linkages between their work ... and the skills that are being communicated to ... [them during] the course”. Jared added “if you are open to ... what’s communicated here (during the course), if you’re open to learning through your work, then I think the two will combine to make you better in what you are doing”.

*Possessing self discipline.*

The participants described self discipline as learners having the discipline to review their course materials, change their behaviors and continue on with their learning efforts. Bonnie for example, described the importance of the learners’ self discipline as “the biggest thing ... would be to review the material periodically”. She explained “you learn a lot but unless you really go back and refresh your memory, or maybe [participate in] a half hour or hour of getting together with the same group afterwards”, the learners may not be as effective in applying their learning. She concluded “the biggest thing ... would be to review the material periodically”. Jared similarly believed that learners “either have [to have] good recall of the [course] material ... or have the organizational skills to go back and review it”. Janice took a harder line than Bonnie and Jared. She believed that learners must “force” themselves to learn and apply, and “force” themselves “to adopt this attitude”. She recalled that when she returned to the office she thought “I will have to change this ... [and] I have to do this. ... I have to push myself”. Janice added “if I don’t learn it’s my own fault because I didn’t take the time because I’ve been too busy. ... You’ve got to take the time for your own career and your own improvement”.

Blake cast self discipline as the learners’ willingness to “learn something different ...

[and] have the ability to listen and not wonder off [during the course]”. He stated that “note taking and group participation [are also important]. ... You practice and you acquire that skill”.

He also recounted that it was important to:

periodically review the material. [To] look at it (the material) more carefully and give myself a refresher and [question] what I could do with it in practice. ... When something comes up, use it. ... You have to go back through your notes and stuff. ... Participate in self help ... seminars ... and maybe every now and then discuss it [with others]. ... The person has to want to grow and learn something new. [Continuous learning is important].

Susan similarly suggested that learners “need some reference books because it’s not finished after five days”. She explained “we still have to go on and continue [to learn] so, some kind of ... reference [material is important]. ... I have to go back to read these books. ... I have to learn more and read and practice this. ... I have to work on it”. Joseph cast the self discipline characteristic as one of “if I promise somebody to do something I will do it, ... otherwise I would not promise [it]”. Finally, John recounted that learners have to be disciplined and “listen to others ... [and] try to understand, comprehend why this is, why they are taking that particular action [and] try things”.

#### *How Transfer Occurred: The Participants’ Transfer Process*

The research participants described the process of how they, as learners, transferred the knowledge, skills or attitudes learned in the course to their work activities in various ways. This process can generally be categorized as an: a) unconscious, b) analytical and c) action oriented process. The next section describes these three processes.

*Unconscious process.*

Jared and Bonnie described the how of their transfer process as an unconscious process. Jared recounted that his process was akin to “an epiphany”. He let what he learned “percolate” and at the right moment, applied his learning. Jared recalled:

I tend to like things to just sit in me and just let them percolate, and wait for the moment to appear where something I came across or learned ... may be applicable. It has to be almost a small epiphany for me for that to happen. When I’m in a situation I say aha, and make the connection. ... Quite how the process has occurred I couldn’t ... really say. ... A course adds (to your knowledge) but it’s useless out of the context of your experience. ... [In] some sort of a context way ... they (knowledge and experience) come together.

Bonnie similarly recollected that her mind unconsciously went back to what she learned and as the occasion arose in her workplace, she applied her learning. She added however, that her transfer process also involved some consciousness as she did speak with her colleagues about the course, upon her return to the office. She stated:

I don’t think that there were any conscious type of steps. Like I didn’t go through in my mind this is ... how I am going to change. I think just as different occasions arose [my] subconscious probably [went] back and pull[ed] out some of the things [I was] taught. ... When I came back [to the office], I know that I did talk to several people and told them about the course and probably would have given them some examples of things we had done ... that I found helpful. So I guess in that way, ... by telling someone else about the course and going through the things in my mind that are involved in being a good communicator, [I was employing a conscious step].

While Joseph did not transfer his learning for purposes of the training program in question, he took the occasion to describe the how of his transfer process in his general training program experiences. Joseph described his transfer process as “ad hoc” and recounted, similar to Jared, that “something comes to my mind ... [from] the course, ... something clicks, ... [and I] say that should be done”. Becoming aware of the relevance of what he learned, Joseph applied his learning as the situation “occurred”.

*Analytical process.*

Janice and John both described the how of their process as a conscious, proactive and analytical process. Janice recounted “some of the things ... that I learned ... [on the course] made me aware and I came [back] here thinking I’m applying this”, like sharing information with and coaching her staff members, as well as having a mentor. Janice explained that her transfer process involved coming back to the workplace, desiring and seeking to apply what she learned, practicing her new skills, interacting with others and through self-reflection, making conscious efforts to change her previous behaviors. John similarly described his transfer process and noted the importance of reflecting on the course materials and on discussions that he had with the other course participants, as well as reflecting on his perspectives and actions. He added that being conscious of how he was “going to apply ... [and trying to] ... apply the knowledge or skill” in his workplace efforts, as well as engaging in discussions with others, were also important to his transfer process. Janice’s and John’s transfer process appeared to involve both an internal, analytical thinking and external, activity based process.

*Action oriented process.*

Finally, Blake and Susan’s transfer process involved a more action oriented process.

Blake described his process as one of asking questions during the training program, drawing on the instructor's expertise, taking notes, referring back to both the course materials and his notes occasionally, talking with colleagues about the materials, and passing information along to and soliciting feedback from his colleagues. Blake explained that he would talk "to a colleague and often I will refer to someone, whether they were on the course or not and discuss situations. ... Before I take any action, I talk to people about the situation, what I'm thinking of doing ... [and ask] can you suggest something to me?"

Susan's process similarly involved referring back to the training manual in a "disciplined manner. ... Not doing this I would be afraid it would become another book or course on the shelf and I don't want this". She recounted the importance of discussing and sharing experiences with her colleagues in order "to understand their experiences and how they resolved situations", and of having a mentor. She added that reading other reference materials, taking notes, reflecting on the course materials and "putting things into practice" were important to her transfer process. Finally, she noted that coaching her own staff members, and holding weekly meetings to debrief and share experiences with them were also key to her process.

In summary, the desire to learn and how transfer occurred themes were described. The participants characterized their course motivations as a desire to improve their performance or develop a skill, change an attitude, make a career decision or their general interest in learning. Their motivations were varied, multifaceted and differed among those who participated in the same course. While a number of the participants for example, were initially motivated by their managers' suggestion, they all identified their own specific motivations and learning goals. Further, while John, Bonnie and Joseph for example, all sought to generally improve their

communications, their specific motivations varied. John sought to receive and deliver the message better and to change some of his perceptions, while Bonnie sought to deal more effectively with difficult people due to a previous negative work experience. Joseph, on the other hand, simply sought to improve his communications. Finally, the majority of the participants' course expectations were also generally met. The fulfillment of their expectations appeared to rest on their specific motivations and learning goals being met.

The attitudes and skills that facilitated the participants' transfer efforts were also varied. They were generally characterized as the learners' open mindedness, positive attitude, interest in and choice of the course, and possessing flexibility and listening skills, for example. They were also described as the learners proactively looking for application opportunities and possessing self discipline. Finally, the how of the participants' transfer processes were characterized as an unconscious, analytical and action oriented process. The subconscious process was described as akin to an epiphany, the analytical process as involving the learners' reflection, dialogue with others and desire to apply what was learned, and the action oriented process as the participants taking notes and referring to them, and having a mentor, for example.

Now that we have a sense of the importance of the individuals' characteristics in the transfer equation, let's take a look at the themes that cluster around the training program's design and development features. The next section of this chapter describes the four themes which cluster around the training program's features.

### *Training Program's Design and Development Features*

This section of the chapter describes the participants' transfer stories as they relate to the what of their experiences and when transfer entered their learning experience. The four themes

which cluster around the training program's design and development features are discourse, the application of the learning to life's situations, when transfer entered the learning experience, and learning by doing. Before presenting the four themes, the general training methods that were identified by the participants as facilitating their transfer efforts will be presented. A brief summary of the findings then follows.

### *General Training Methods*

The training methods employed in any training program are key to facilitating the learners' learning and transfer efforts. They are also critical to a training program's development and to successful outcomes. During the interview the participants were, therefore, invited to share their experiences concerning the training methods that were most conducive to their transfer efforts. Before engaging in a discussion of the four training program themes, the following section briefly discusses the training methods that were most facilitative of the participants' transfer of learning.

As will be recalled, all three courses in this study employed a theory component and various training methods. The Power of Communications, the two day course, employed for example, exercises on topics such as communications, negotiation, empathy and feedback, as well as personal assignment worksheets and role plays. The People Oriented Management (POMP), the three day course, employed various exercises such as communications, feedback, leadership, management and coaching. Role plays, videos and assisting the participants in understanding their Myers Briggs profile were also included. Finally, the Leadership Training, the 10 (5+5) day course, employed exercises such as communications, feedback, coaching and a learning partnership. It also included role plays, videos, a conflict resolution diagnostic

instrument, a case study and an executive mock interview.

Generally speaking, the participants identified an array of training methods which they found useful to their transfer efforts. Jared for example, recounted that he “found the instruction [and the interaction] the most useful” methods in the POMP. He explained “when the ... facilitator was presenting information and the exchange that [went] on. ... Other courses its been exercises but we didn’t ... take much time out to do actual hands on stuff as I recall”. Jared further noted that “learn[ing] through doing” and having a structured learning environment were also important to his transfer of learning, in general. Blake’s POMP experience differed from Jared’s. Blake recollected that “getting to know [my]self [through the Myers Briggs instrument]” was the most useful training method for him. He added that “the theory, problem solving exercises and exercises related to communications were also important”. Blake however, generally found a combination of case studies, team exercises, interaction with others and videos to all be useful to transfer but noted that videos were the most useful to him. He explained “I really enjoy videos because with a video I often pick up the name and then I can replay it. It is always going to be the same. ... Whereas, if I say to an instructor you said this, ... he may not be able to follow along on what I want to know and may not give the same example of what he was talking about [the day earlier]”.

With respect to the most useful training methods employed in the Power of Communications course, John recounted “I think the theory that was used by the trainer. I think the exercises where you think of a particular situation and you sort of identify it, and think of how you would go about making, doing the communications and sort of building that with a partner is quite valuable”. John added “the most valuable part [however], is ... when you hear

what some of the others have been thinking about, some of the situations which are a problem for them and how they are thinking of solving it. ... You can understand how you would have reacted, ... how you would deal with this.” John recalled that generally speaking, “real life situations”, watching a “video” and “role plays” were particularly useful to his transfer efforts.

Bonnie, on the other hand, explained that she “enjoyed the team exercises ... [and] the theory part was very useful”. She noted that the team building exercise where the individuals had to come to a consensus was useful as she had to “voice and effectively communicate her opinion, be flexible and listen to other people’s opinions”. Generally speaking, she enjoyed having an “opportunity to perform a task or ... to practice a new skill”. Finally, Joseph recounted that he found the discussion on “the testing of assumptions” and the “desert walk” team building exercises to be the most useful training methods. Generally speaking, Joseph found that “real work scenarios”, such as case studies, were the most useful training methods to his transfer of learning.

In terms of the Leadership Training Course, Janice explained that all of the training program methods were “useful to some extent but because of me and the person that I am, what was most useful to me was self reflection with the texts and the interaction [with others], listening to people and looking at what they do”. Janice also noted that she found the mock interview “really amazing, looking at how people reacted while they [were] being interviewed, how I reacted”. This was a very practical aspect of the course for her. Janice proceeded to explain that during the second week of her course, the training was not very effective. In fact, “it was hell. The whole week of listening to people, of stuff that was not all that interesting to start with. ... You had to learn about HR ... [and] finance, and then ... you’d go back to your case study

that had nothing to do with what ... you were listening to. [They] should have had us practice what we just learned that day”. Janice concluded “I learn from all courses and all techniques but the maximum of my learning is ... [through] self reflection and applied learning”. Finally, Susan noted that the conflict resolution exercises, the instructors’ and the participants’ feedback, the theory, the interactions, her Myers Briggs profile results, and her conflict management instrument results were all useful to her transfer efforts. She added however, that the conflict resolution results were “where I really learned and I have to work on it. ... I thought I was really good at conflict resolution but when I look[ed] at the results I said oh, I have to work on this”! Generally speaking, Susan found interaction, learning by doing and reference materials to be important to her transfer efforts.

While an array of training methods were identified as facilitating the participants’ transfer efforts, four themes emerged upon further analysis of the data. The following section addresses these four themes.

### *Discourse*

The discourse theme related to the value of the other course participants’ opinions, experiences and alternative points of view, during the course, to the participants’ transfer efforts. Those opinions, points of view and experiences assisted the participants in confirming their learning and changing their perspectives. Following the course, only Susan participated in a follow up networking activity. Many of the other participants however, believed that a follow-up session and networking opportunities with the other course participants would have been useful in identifying how the course materials might have been more effectively applied in their work activities. As the participants discussed their experiences in the context of the different training

program stages, the following section addresses the participants' accounts by the during and after training program stages.

During the course, through interacting and sharing experiences with the other course participants, Bonnie believed that she was able to change her perspectives and take some comfort in having her thinking validated. She recounted that a learner must "be able to give and take ... and realize that other[s'] opinions are very valuable. ... You can often change your mind on things", as a result of those opinions. Bonnie added that during the communications course "it was interesting to see other [people's] perspectives around the room. You felt that you were not alone in the way that you were thinking. ... [It] was very helpful and I guess just generally, it was a good feeling". John similarly recounted that "the most valuable part" of a training program is the interaction and discussions with others, hearing about "what some others have been thinking about, some of the situations which are a problem for them and how they are thinking of solving [them]. ... You can understand how you would have reacted and maybe, you have been in a similar situation which worked" that you can share with them. John added that feedback from others was also very important. He explained "it really helps me to understand and apply [when I am able] to get the [other participants'] feedback".

Janice recalled "you have to realize that a good part of your learning will not come from your teachers, it will come from your peers. ... The interaction, listening to people and looking at what they do" is important to the learning and transfer process. Susan similarly recollected that "we need the theory absolutely to begin, ... but I think that we learn ... [through] interaction with others. ... I'm not self sufficient. ... We learn a lot when we share with others". Susan added "this feeds me". Blake too recalled that "participation [in discussions with others] was a key ... to

[his] learning and practice efforts". He remarked, time "for interaction is important". Finally, Jared noted that the interactions, "the exchange that goes on in the course ... between the participants" was important to his transfer of learning.

Following the course, Susan recalled "interaction is so important. ... I have to share with others, I have to learn and listen to what they have to say, how they apply the[ir] learning. This is something that is important to me. ... Networking is very important. ... Just to share a bit of a chemis de main in the leadership field ... Maybe, [with] two course participants". Susan continued to explain "I question myself and I like to have the input of peers or participants on all levels, new leaders with a lot of experience. It makes a big difference. ... Besides that it is important to confirm [your learning and thinking]. ... I can learn ... [from] all different opinions, ... different behaviours and I think I can evolve a lot through this".

From Bonnie's perspective "a follow-up session [with the other course participants] really kind of puts you in a position where you are going to look at it (your learning and transfer efforts), discuss it and may be kind of realize that I could be doing this or that. So I think the biggest thing, [is] to follow-up". Bonnie suggested:

maybe half an hour or an hour of getting together with the same group afterwards, like a month or two down the road just to go over and discuss what you do differently or ... you changed or those type of things. ... Very quickly go around the room and see what people thought [about the course] and [question] did they really bring into play some of the things that they learned?

Joseph, similar to Bonnie, suggested that the course participants should "come back two weeks later or something and go through a half day reinforcement or refresher on it (the course

content) to ensure that the people are utilizing or they figured out that given the training they can use 25 or 50% of it and work on it (the application of their learning)". Joseph added the learners might also "figure out in ... [that] session whether other things are useful to them or not". Finally, one of the participants during the focus group noted that generally speaking, he frequently followed up with the other course participants to discuss the materials and possible application opportunities.

#### *Application of the Learning to Life's Situations*

The application of the learning to life's situations theme related to the application of the learning in the different contexts of the participants' lives - professional, personal and social, and to the learners examining "real-life" work situations during the training program, as a means of enhancing their transfer efforts. While the participants, as discussed in the Did Transfer Occur section, noted the application of knowledge, skills or attitudes in the various contexts of their lives, the application of the learning to life's situations theme related to the participants' need for the course content itself to have application in the different contexts of their lives. The participants believed that the relevance of the course to their life in general, was key to their transfer efforts. The following section addresses the everyday life and real life work aspects of the theme.

#### *Everyday life situations - Professional, personal and social.*

Many of the participants noted the importance of applying the course materials in the various contexts of their lives as a key factor in their transfer efforts. Bonnie for example, recollected that she believed the course "would help in [her] everyday communication in the office, as well as ... outside the office". She explained that a communications course "definitely

involves more than just your workplace. ... Being a communicator is something you do everyday, every time you are interacting with people". Bonnie added that "it was really important ... that I could bring what I learned back into the office and also [into] my personal life. ... What I could do to improve myself as an individual was very important to me". John similarly recounted that he questioned whether the course materials were relevant to him personally, beyond the demands of his work activities. He explained "[I questioned] does it actually work for me, does it actually work in my work or family or my life or everyday environment?" Blake too noted "I can't speak for everyone else but I think that if its (the course content) relevant to your life, [personal and professional], that helps" with transfer.

Susan recalled that she participated in the Leadership training because she wanted "to know more about leadership and again, not necessarily to become [a] senior manage[r] but it's good ... in my working environment and it's good in my social life. Into my personal life, when I raise my kids". She added that when she attended a course she sought "to make sure that [she could] apply it to [her] job environment as an employee, [as] a leader, [and] into [her] personal life. ... It's great for myself, my family and my social life". Susan explained "any course that I take, ... it's always the same thing that I ask, how can I apply this at work, at home and into my social life?" Janice similarly commented "you don't ... just apply them (the course materials) at work but you apply them to your entire life. ... Even if I don't want to go anywhere with this (course), this is going to make me a better person, a better manager. ... The skills they teach you, you don't ... just apply them at work but you apply them to your entire life". Finally, Jared noted that the course "gave [him] things that [he] thought about applying, ... [in his] all around communications", suggesting that the application opportunities were beyond his work activities.

*Real-life work situations.*

The participants further noted the importance of having opportunities to address “real life” work situations, during the course, to their transfer efforts. John for example, recounted that it was important for the trainer and the other course participants to “bring up some examples, ... in their work life, ... [of] things ... which were a challenge” for them. He added that it was important for the learners:

to look at some real life situations where if time is adequate, then you can start thinking of situations where you would like to change or situations where you would like for things to happen differently in your workplace and then be able to have a discussion or get ideas from other people in the group. Maybe have almost like a role play on that particular theme and get some comfort if you want, with doing things differently.

Joseph, like John, recounted that examining “something that is going to be used or could be used, ... something live rather than academic, ... something that’s closer to [your] work” was important to his transfer efforts. Janice, on the other hand, recollected how the real life work situations addressed during the course helped in her transfer efforts. She explained “the governance [part of the] course [provided] guidance, ... [a better understanding of] how it (the government) works so when you [sit] down and start planning, ... you understand why these decisions were taken and where they’re going to take the government. ... I [now] know more about what I’m talking about”. Janice added “when I heard the Speech from the Throne, I understood more [about] the context. ... I’m understanding better how [and] why its got to go that way”. Susan, similar to Janice’s experience, noted that during the course “we had some cases that we had to resolve with others. This was perfect!” She explained “by having real life

[conflict resolution] situations” in the training program she was able “to go back [to the reference material] and look at it, how did we react, how did we resolve this?” Having the “real life” examples during the course and the related reference materials which she could refer back to, Susan could “make sure [she] follow[ed] the right steps” when addressing conflict situations in her work activities.

Blake commented that he decided to participate in the training program because of the real life examples that were going to be addressed. Examples which he believed would help him in dealing with employee disciplinary problems that he was experiencing in the workplace at the time. Blake recounted:

there were a lot of examples that were going to be given from elsewhere [during the course]. ... That was something that I was looking forward to seeing because there were certain issues that were I guess, disciplinary problems that we were having that were going to be addressed ... at that course. ... [Issues that] could help us with ... the problems that we were facing at that time.

Jared too noted that “one of the things [he] wanted to look for [during the course] was how to deal with difficult performance problems. How to deal with providing performance [feedback]”. He explained that he “wanted to pick up some tips or some skills on how to coach effectively” and thereby, better address the demands of his “real life” work situations. Finally, Bonnie recollected that she learned “by doing” and transferred her learning by being “put right into the activity” during a training program. She stated “a task for your job that your boss might ask you to do [when you return to work]” for example, helped in her workplace application efforts.

*When Transfer Entered the Participants' Learning Experience*

As discussed in Chapter two, the before, during and after training program stages, or the when of transfer, were important to transfer. An interesting aspect of the “when” of transfer is when learners begin to think about transferring the course content to their work activities. The research participants were thus invited to describe when they first started to think about transferring the course content to their work activities, and to further describe other points in time when they were aware of transfer opportunities. Their first awareness of transfer was, once again, varied. In fact, the points in time when the participants thought about transferring the course content to their work activities were almost as varied as the participants themselves. The following section addresses these points in time, by training program stage.

*Before and during.*

Susan recounted that she first thought about transferring the course content to her work activities before the course. She recalled that she hoped to “obtain [a] comprehensive, leadership management” reference “in one binder”, and to have the opportunity to network and share experiences with others. Susan added that when engaging in the conflict resolution case study, during the course, she also thought about transfer possibilities.

*Before and after.*

Bonnie recalled that her first awareness of transfer opportunities was before registering for the course. She recounted “just the whole nature and name of the course, I knew it would be helpful”. Upon her return to the workplace, Bonnie was further conscious of transfer possibilities. She explained “I was hoping like the very next morning when I came (back) to be able to start” to apply that learning.

*During and after.*

Blake recollected that he was first aware during the course itself “when we were trying to measure performance, [when] we were actually trying to work out a plan”. Blake added that he “related a lot of what [he] was seeing [during the course] to what [he] had experienced, ... [and questioned] what else [he] could have done ... when a situation arose. ... How [he] could have been [more] proactive”. Upon his return to the workplace, Blake thought about transfer opportunities when he applied the course content and as he shared the course materials with his colleagues. John similarly, was first aware during the training program itself when he related the course materials and discussions to his work situations, and following the course when he “was going to apply” the information, as “the situation occur[ed]”.

Janice too mentioned that it was during the course itself, in discussions with the other course participants, that she first became aware of and identified areas within herself and her work activities that she wanted to enhance or change. She noted that the other participants’ perspectives “helped her to look at people and issues very differently”. Following the course, Janice was also aware, through flashes of the course discussions and situations, of material that was relevant to her work activities. Janice recounted:

It’s during the course that I started thinking, like they would say something or I would hear somebody say something or do chit chats during coffee with colleagues ... and that’s when it triggered [it] - this I’m good at so I’ll enhance this or that I’m really bad at, I will have to change this. I just came into work and I [thought] ... ok, now you have to do this. So [now] I sit back and it’s like I have a flash, a flash of people, a flash of conversations. ... Sometimes now I read stuff, ... [as] an example, when the budget came out I

understood a lot more about the budget than I did before [because] now I had the context.

*After.*

Jared recalled that he was first aware of trying to apply the communications material with his staff, particularly the material relat[ed] to being a good listener and of being critical of his writing approach “fairly quickly after [he] came back” to the office.

*No awareness.*

Finally, Joseph recounted that the course information got “internalized”. He could not recollect any awareness of transferring the course information to his work activities. Joseph explained “things get internalized so I’m not doing it consciously [like] I learned on this course or the other course that it should be used. ... Somewhere, it is in my day to day work that I just do it and not think of it and not say, oh ya I learned it - that course A here or course C [there] should be applied”.

The majority of the participants at other points during the interview however, noted that they thought primarily about the instructor and the course’s organization and content, during the course (Jared, Bonnie, Susan and Janice). Jared for example, in recollecting his thoughts during the course, noted that the instructor was “very good, very experienced, a good communicator and [had] effective training skills. ... I was impressed with the way he engaged us. ... He was very organized. [The course] was logical, ... methodical”. Jared further commented on the effectiveness of the team and communications discussions, and the Myers Briggs diagnostic instrument employed during the course. Bonnie similarly recounted that the instructor was “excellent”. She noted that he brought “the best out of the group, ... it was interesting to see [the] other perspectives around the room”. Like Jared, Bonnie commented that the “team building

exercise was [also] quite good”.

A number of the participants, Janice, Jared and Blake, also recalled thinking about their workload requirements, upon their return to the workplace. Janice recounted “I thought how the hell am I going to apply that? ... I didn’t have much time to think about it because I’ve got so much work to do, it is not even funny”. Jared similarly recollected that he thought about “how much work [he] had to do since [he] was away” while Blake noted that due to the workload, he recalled thinking that “the information [will] fade away”.

### *Learn by Doing*

The learn by doing theme related to the participants’ need to learn through applied learning. They believed that by having sufficient practice opportunities to apply their knowledge, skills or attitudes, both during and following the training program, that their transfer efforts were facilitated. The following section addresses this theme by training program stage.

#### *Applied learning during the course.*

The participants believed that learning through applied learning or having sufficient practice opportunities during the course, was important to their transfer efforts. John described his learning and transfer experience as one of “I need to apply to be able to, ... for it [the learning] to really register. ... So two days, this course was, is not much time to get the theory and to do the discussion around that and apply it. ... In two days it is not enough time to experiment and apply. So, its easy when you go back [to the workplace] and sort of not do it because you are not quite confident enough to really go back and apply it”. John added that it was essential that he “really” be “give[n] the opportunity [during the course] to practice, ... get feedback, ... change and ... modify ... [his] behavior”. He suggested that in a “longer [training program], you are able

to try looking out ... [different] windows and seeing how it feels [and] to adjust yourself to that. ... [By] not really getting enough experience when in the training”, John returned to the workplace “not really comfortable trying or applying these things”. He, therefore, “tend[ed] to maybe do a trial or sort of a low level trial”, when he returned to work.

Jared similarly recounted that he learned by “doing things. ... I learn through doing things. ... Sometimes you just have to do it, you can’t possibly learn it any other way”. Bonnie too recollected that “probably ... it’s the type of person that I am. I learn by doing. So, [I enjoy] get[ting] put right into the activity. ... I like doing, ... get[ting the] time to really work on it” during the training program. She added that applied learning and practice opportunities help learners to “see the link. ... [The learners must] see the linkages of what [they] are learning to bring it back and apply it”. Janice also believed that she did not learn unless she practiced her learning. She recollected “I don’t learn unless you make me practice and make me swim in it, the actual practice. ... Applied learning is the best way for me to learn”. Susan too noted that she learned “by put[ting her learning] into practice”. She mentioned that she was very appreciative of the opportunity, during the course, “to resolve [conflict] with others”. She explained “this was perfect” but added “we should have had more time to share this because we were not really ... engaged in this. ... I think more practice [time] would have been good because we don’t often deal well with conflict resolution” situations in the workplace. Finally, Blake simply noted that “practice” during the course, was important for learners to “practice and acquire [a] skill”.

*Applied learning upon return to the workplace.*

Another aspect of the learning by doing theme was the participants’ belief that having opportunities to apply their learning, upon their return to the workplace, facilitated their transfer.

Bonnie recounted that it was important to her transfer efforts “to get back to the office and [have opportunities for] the practical application of what you have learned. ... Once you take a course, you have [to have] an opportunity when [you go] back [to the office] to actually work on that skill”. She stated “the practical application of what you have learned is the key” to transfer. Jared, while not having this particular experience upon his return to the workplace, similarly suggested that learners should have “opportunities ... to do a piece of work that they haven’t done before”. He explained that “having, almost insisting that people who take training report back to their group on their experience [would be useful to their transfer efforts]. ... It forces them to go through it again and also demonstrates some courage I think, on part of the management team to be a learning organization”. He added that “stretch assignment[s] ... or asking someone to do a piece of work they haven’t done before, ... which relate[s] to the skills being learned or studied” would also be useful to course participants. Providing learners with opportunities to apply newly learned behaviors are important as they “give them some measure of responsibility”.

John recounted that learners, upon their return to the workplace, should apply their learning “when they encounter [application opportunities]”. He explained “when a situation presents itself, ... [they should] at least try things, ... try things a little differently to see how it’s going to work”. Blake recollected that he attempted “to go on as many courses” as he could but suggested that if the management team “are not going to apply anything that I learn, ... [considering the expense], they are not going to get much back”. Blake added that “a lot of the information [learned in the course] is lost when you come back to the real world working. A lot of that information, ... fade[s] away so that you are not sure of what you will do”, if you do not have application opportunities upon return to the workplace. Blake suggested that it was

important “to have weekly or biweekly meetings to talk about things [that] you learned on the course, or have information sessions with all employees. ... We can learn from it”. Joseph similarly posited that if the learning is not applied immediately, transfer is inhibited. Joseph explained “I guess most of the time there’s nothing concrete or at least that [I] apply immediately”, as his learning is typically more general than local area network (lan) support training for example. Joseph stated that the lan support training “is applied immediately” upon the learners’ return to their workplace, unlike his work. He noted “my work is such that I don’t need that information right away”.

Janice cast this issue somewhat differently by noting that “if everybody learned ... and applied [their learning], ... we’d have such a better environment”. She explained that what she learned on the course “made [her more] aware”. She consequently, returned to the workplace “thinking I’m applying this, like the sharing of information” which, in turn, enhanced the work environment for her staff members and herself. Finally, Susan recalled that it was important for “the leaders ... to make sure they give time to the employees to learn and put into practice what they have learned”, upon their return to the workplace.

In summary, the participants identified an array of training methods that were useful to their application efforts. These methods ranged from the theory, to a structured learning environment, video instruction, case studies and role plays, to the availability of reference materials prior to and following the training program. Four main themes, related to the training program’s features, emerged from further exploration of the data. These themes were discourse, application of the learning to life’s experiences, when transfer entered the learning experience and learning by doing.

The discourse theme related to the value of the other course participants' opinions and experiences, both during and following the training program, to the research participants' learning and transfer efforts. The application of the learning to life's situations theme related to the participants' belief that the application of their transfer efforts were facilitated when the course materials had wider application, to the different contexts of their lives, and when they had practice opportunities which addressed "real life" work situations during the training program. In describing when transfer entered their training experience, the majority of the participants thought about possible application opportunities in the before and after training program stages. During the training program however, the majority of the participants unfortunately, did not think about application opportunities. Rather, they thought about the instructor, and the course's organization and content. Finally, the learning by doing theme addressed the learners' need to learn through applied learning. The participants believed that by having sufficient practice opportunities to apply their knowledge, skills or attitudes, both during and following the training program, that their transfer efforts were facilitated.

Now that we have an understanding of the individuals' characteristics and the training program's design and development features, our attention turns to the final two themes. The next section of this chapter addresses the two themes which cluster around the organizational climate characteristics.

### **Organizational Climate Characteristics**

The participants described a work environment that facilitated their transfer efforts as an open and supportive culture. They, in turn, described the major challenges to their transfer efforts as time, evolving oneself as a learner and the work environment. The next section

explores and describes these two themes. An overall summary of the findings then follows.

### *An Open and Supportive Culture*

The participants characterized a work environment that was facilitative of their transfer efforts as an open, positive, trusting and supportive culture. In addition to the participants having opportunities to apply their learning in their workplace activities and participating in follow-up activities with the other course participants, as described in the training program's features section, the participants placed a particular emphasis on the support that they received from their managers, mentors, colleagues and staff. The following section addresses the open, positive and trusting aspects of this theme, followed by a discussion of a supportive manager and mentor, and colleague and staff aspects.

#### *An open, positive and trusting culture.*

The participants believed that an open, positive and trusting culture facilitated their transfer efforts. Jared for example, described a culture that facilitated his transfer of learning as "a relaxed environment, ... it's respectful, open, [positive and] it's trusting". He explained that in such a culture "its easier to apply new things, to try new things, to get a sense that what you're doing is having a ... positive effect". Jared added that a facilitative culture would also have "a willingness for risk taking".

For John, a facilitative culture included management's open mindedness. He explained managers need to be "open minded enough to look at the possibilities of what is being offered" by the learner when they attempt to apply their learning. Managers need to see "or at least be open minded enough to look at the possibilities of what is being offered, to see further down [the road], longer term as opposed to shorter term". He posited that the management team must not

only “question how to make employees more effective in their work”, but they must also be open to innovative ideas and “forgive” employees’ learning mistakes. Bonnie similarly suggested that the work environment should be “a very open environment” where employees feel free enough “to discuss issues with [their] colleagues or supervisors”. Bonnie noted that her management team “has an open door policy”.

Janice, Susan and Joseph, like Jared, all raised the issue of trust. Janice noted “my boss trusts me implicitly. ... So, its conducive [to] my learning. ... The management board trusts me and gives me the opportunity to do what I think needs to be done to achieve the goals that we are setting”. Susan similarly recounted that the management team’s trust in her abilities was conducive to her transfer efforts. She explained “trust from the senior executives to put me on [these] new committees, to trust my knowledge and ... [to transfer] what I’ve learned ... [to the committees]. ... To bring back what I’ve learned” to the workplace. Joseph, in raising the trust aspect, noted that it was important that people’s word be trusted. If they give their word, then colleagues should “be able to count on them” to deliver on their work plans, for example.

*Supportive managers and mentors.*

The majority of the participants noted the importance of receiving support from their managers and mentors, upon their return to the workplace, to their transfer efforts. The following section addresses this aspect of the theme.

Bonnie recalled that upon her return to the workplace, she spoke with her director “about the course” and engaged in “a short discussion about the [course] benefits and what I got out of it and what I learned”. Bonnie posited that by employees “explaining what the course was about, what you have learned” and questioning if the course was “something that other employees can

benefit from”, was beneficial to employees in their transfer efforts. Bonnie continued to add that:

managers really help you to ... put into play what you have learned. In our branch, the management [team] is very open and encourage training and maybe not all branches are like that. ... Notionally they set aside a certain amount [of money] ... and encourage people to take advantage of [it]. They also allow you an opportunity to do a brown bag session on what you learned. ... They (managers) almost expect that you are going to apply some of what you learned. That is really why they approve you to go.

Blake similarly recounted the importance of a follow up discussion with his manager, upon his return to the workplace. He recalled that the discussion concerned “what did you learn [and] the plans on what I intended to do” in my career. His supervisor also solicited his “feedback on the course”. He explained that his “supervisor is now more participative. Not only her but upper management. Upper management is showing interest in what the lower echelons are doing”. Blake suggested that “if management ... [was to] show a little bit more involvement ... [such as asking] for updates, ... [questioning employees about] what [they] ... learn[ed] and how [they] can apply it, ... it would probably be easier to facilitate and apply some of the things that [they] learn[ed]”.

Susan recollected that it was important for managers to take the time and ask their employees when they “come back from training ... did you really enjoy that course? How do you think that you can put this in practice? Let’s talk about it. Let’s share what we have learned because if there is no sharing of experience or training there is a chance that it will be forgotten”. Susan added that employees should also question themselves “how can I apply this in real life, to [my] work environment? ... How can [I] contribute to this organization?” Susan further noted

the importance of her mentor in her transfer efforts, “someone who will follow me, guide me, ... support me” and of having a Personal Learning Plan (PLP). She stated that the PLP “is a very good initiative. ... It is clear what we (manager and employee) both want. ... I have projects, but we have to define some other projects and we have to evaluate and make sure that I am going in the right direction”. Finally, Susan believed that her “position as a leader has facilitate[d] this (her transfer)”.

Janice too noted the importance of her mentor, an Executive, to her learning and transfer efforts. She stated “I have a mentor, [who] give[s] me guidance. ... I [sent] him e-mails of what I felt [about the course] and what I went through, how I learned, what I thought was interesting ... [and] useful. ... [When we met], I told him give me guidance, ... what should I do, what’s my next step?”. She added that her conversation with her mentor “made [her] realize that sometimes you’ve got to apply what you’ve learned and develop it further. You can’t always move ... [on to new positions because] you haven’t had the time to really develop what you are learning”. Janice also recounted that her boss’ support facilitated her transfer. She explained “my boss has always been very supportive of my learning. ... I’ll say look I need to brush up on these skills and he will support it. So when you have an environment like that you can not, not learn. If I don’t learn its my own fault”.

Jared, John and Joseph did not receive support from their managers upon their return to the workplace. They did however, raise the importance of managerial support in an employees’ transfer efforts. Jared for example, recounted that the “support of the management environment, the supervisory environment is key in my view” to application. He added that managers should provide the learners with opportunities “to do a piece of work they haven’t done before, which

relate[s] to the skills being learned or studied”. He explained “if someone had done a management course, how to manage people, give them a task that will give them some measure of responsibility, leadership responsibility, managing people, [or] a team leadership project”. John similarly suggested that learners need “to be able to apply some of the things that [they] learn[ed] during [their] training”. Managers are critical in that. He recalled that managers must “be open minded and question how to make employees more effective in their work”. Managers must also ensure that the culture “is prepared to listen and apply” the employees’ knowledge and skills. He added that managers should work in conjunction with their employees on Personal Learning Plans (PLP) and explained that with the PLPs, the department is “trying to get the organization to identify what [training] is important and by doing that, ... [they’re] creating a different attitude [in] people because now they know they are going to learn something which is valued and useful [to] the organization”.

Finally, Joseph suggested that a “re-enforcement of [the training] material” was important to transfer. He explained “if [employees] take a course and somebody sits down and does this sort of follow up two weeks later on how is it ... being applied, that may improve the learning element or absorption element. ... This type of follow-up, depending on the complexity of the course, a couple of weeks later or a month later, ... can rekindle the desire to learn or to apply”.

In exploring the specific support that the participants received from their managers, a number of the participants received support in the before training program stage only, while others received support in the before and after, and the before, during and after stages. Before the training program, John, Jared and Joseph for example, all had discussions with their managers. As noted earlier, John’s discussion took place during a performance feedback session.

John explained that following that discussion, he “applied for the course and there was no discussion or anything [with his manager], it was just basically approved”. John did not receive any further managerial support. John noted “two days I mean, you apply for the training and a couple of months later you go on the training. I don’t even think that the manager even remembers that’s where I was and that’s what I was doing”. Jared’s manager, on the other hand, when he requested the training simply noted “it’s a good course”. Jared recounted “there wasn’t a lot of engagement with me about the course” other than that. Finally, Joseph’s manager simply signed the training application form. Joseph recollected “if I want to take a course, I initiate it and it gets approved. It’s just a formality. There’s no follow-up”.

Both Bonnie and Blake, on the other hand, received their managers’ support before and after the training program. Bonnie’s support consisted, as noted earlier, of her manager discussing the course outline and the benefits of the program with her before the course. Bonnie explained “my boss is very supportive. ... I thought that it was something I could benefit from so I did discuss it with him. And, he had no problem with that”. Following the course, she had “a short discussion about the benefits of the course, ... what I got out of it and what I learned”, as well as receiving positive feedback on her application efforts. Blake’s supervisor, on the other hand, enquired about his career plans before the training. Following the training, his manager asked about the course and “wanted [his] feedback, ... how did you find it?” Blake stated that “she was very supportive and is getting involved more and more”.

Finally, Susan’s and Janice’s manager, unlike the other participants’ managers, provided them with support during all three training program stages. Susan explained that her manager nominated her for the training. From her perspective, “he put my name on the list. ... [This]

shows respect that he knows my capacity, he recognized my leadership, that I can do more”.

During the training, Susan telephoned her manager “and shared [her] thoughts about the course” with him. She recalled that “he was very supportive”. Following the course, her manager became her mentor and they “signed an accord”, a Personal Learning Plan outlining some job assignments, for example.

Janice’s experience differed somewhat from Susan’s as her manager did not provide much support before the training. Janice explained “I’m pretty much on my own”. Her manager, like John, Jared and Joseph’s, simply signed the training request form. During the course however, her boss provided her with “all the flexibility for the time” required. She explained, if needed, “he would [have taken] the flack [for] ... anything that would [have] happen[ed]. ... He wouldn’t have called me back” to the office. Following the program, Janice’s manager was very supportive of her application efforts, particularly as they related to her strategic planning efforts.

*Supportive colleagues and staff.*

The participants further noted that engaging in discussions with their colleagues and staff concerning what they learned, subsequent to the training program, enhanced their transfer. They also suggested that their colleagues’ and staff’s openness to those discussions and their new ideas were important considerations in their transfer efforts. Bonnie for example, stated “when I came back I know that I did talk to several people and told them about the course and probably would have given them some examples of things we had done ... that I found helpful. ... People that you work with [are] really important. How receptive they are to sometimes discussing what you learned or discussing [your] ideas”. She noted “you ... see informal mentoring [going on]. Some of the junior people kind of working with the more senior staff to try to get some of their

knowledge before they leave and take it with them". Bonnie also recalled that having an opportunity to "do a brown bag session on what you learned so that other people can also get something out of [it]" was important to transfer as it reinforces the learning. Jared recollected that "another thing that actually could help a lot is having, almost insisting, that people who take training report back to their group on their experience. It forces them to go through it again".

Blake noted that upon his return to the workplace, he spoke with his colleagues and asked them to "coach [and] guide me. ... Before I take any action, I talk to people about the situation and what I'm thinking of doing [and ask] can you suggest something to me?" He added that having "weekly or biweekly meetings to talk about things you learned on the course, or hav[ing] information sessions with all employees, little retreats" were also very important. Susan similarly mentioned that holding "staff meetings every week [with her] counterparts" helped in her transfer efforts. She added "I bring [back] what I found and share it with others. I share the information with my peers and my branch, and I bring this back because I think that this is part of ... leadership, not just keep[ing] it to myself. ... We have to share information, we have to talk". Susan also stated that "coaching toward [her] staff" was important to her application efforts and explained that the course "gave me kind of an energy to continue to coach my staff, and to recognize their great achievements, to congratulate them".

Janice recollected that coaching her staff members also facilitated her application efforts. She explained "so, now I'm giving a lot more information [to my staff members] than I used to and sometimes I think it has changed. [Now] I don't have to drive them anymore. I just sit back and watch what they do and comment on what they do, and give them guidance and away they go". She added that by her staff "strongly believ[ing] in" her, she had more "fuel in getting

better”.

Finally, Jared posited that:

one of the things we in the department should do is [to] try and help managers be[come] better coaches. I mean to me coaching is critical and its more than just telling people what to do. ... If the consciousness was raised a small amount, it might go a long way in the employees’ mind in terms of, in a sense, that they are understood, that they are appreciated, that they can ask questions, [and] get feedback. It just might have a really positive impact. ... I think that is critical.

### *Major Challenges to Transfer*

The major challenges to the participants’ transfer efforts were identified as time, evolving oneself as a learner and the work environment. The following section sequentially addresses these challenges.

#### *Time.*

The participants identified time as a major challenge, throughout the three training program stages, to their transfer efforts. Before the training program, John described time away from the job to attend the training program as a challenge. He explained that before the program he thought about whether the training program was “long enough” and whether he was “going to get what [he] need[ed]”. He also questioned “is this the right training or should I be taking or should I be looking at something else?” John added “there is always the issue about time off the job. ... So, I decided to go for this one”, the two day course.

During the training program, John addressed the issue of time as one of not having sufficient practice opportunities. As noted earlier, John believed that two days of training “was

not enough time to experiment and to apply. ... So, it's easy when you go back, to not [apply your learning] because you are not quite confident enough to really go back and apply it". He suggested that with shorter courses, he consequently returned to the office and "tend[ed] to ... do a low trial [effort]. ... You are not going to try something completely different in a situation". He added that with longer courses, "you are able to try looking out these other windows and seeing how it feels, to adjust yourself to that". Blake similarly recounted that with shorter courses, there is "no time for questions, no time for lunch, we are on a clock. So there is not much time for interaction". He added, during the narrative interview, that his three day course was condensed from a five day course, and noted that "there was too much material for three days. ... They shortened it down to three days so there was a lot of information" to cover. He recalled that a colleague, who had participated in a similar three week course, "seemed to know better what to do" and posited that the "length of the course may be the reason".

Janice similarly suggested that during a course "they only teach you the top. They can't get into it (the material) too much because there's not enough time [to deal with everything properly]. So for me to learn more, I would have to get into it deeper on my own". Finally, Susan noted that during a course it was important "to share information. We have to talk. It's too fast to have one week of training".

Finally, following the training program, John noted that "the work day is always very, very full so the time factor is also one where it's much easier at least at the outset, faster to get something done the old way than to try to apply something new". He added "quite often, you're quite comfortable with the outcome, the results of applying the old way. So, you're less vulnerable I guess in applying the old thinking because you've probably been successful in doing

it that way for a number of years. You know what you're dealing with". Jared recounted that "it's only the demand for output, the deadlines, the getting the job done, that type of pressure that takes away from the time that you might otherwise spend contemplating, thinking through things, have more regular meetings, planning, those types of things". He added that due to the time factor "you put the [training material] on the shelf and you say I should get back to this in a couple of weeks and go through it again but you don't actually do it. ... At the end of the day, ... the job has to be done". Bonnie similarly noted that "too many demands in the workplace can make transfer difficult".

Janice recalled thinking, following the course, "how the hell am I going to apply this? You know it's all nice and dandy but what do you do now? ... I didn't have much time to think about it because I got so much work to do it's not even funny". She added "I'm way too busy. I mean I would love to do more reading. You know we have a lot of reading to do. ... I've got my basket there and it never sees the light. ... I have so many things to read and I don't read half of what I'm supposed to do, just to do my job. So, never mind reading [the] other stuff". Susan, on the other hand, recounted "I would like to have shared more with my boss [upon my return to the office]. But this is something I understand that Senior Management, ... they are very busy but we are all busy". Finally, Blake explained that upon his return to the workplace, the workload was very demanding. He noted "meanwhile everything around you has got to keep moving and I find that difficult. ... You have to keep your stats flowing [and] ... I think we get distracted by these things. ... [Through time], the knowledge we learned starts to slowly fade" away, thus impeding transfer.

*Evolving oneself as a learner.*

For many of the participants, evolving or changing themselves as a learner was a challenge to their transfer efforts. Janice explained “changing myself. That’s the biggest thing I have ever been through in all learning. ... Any learning activity, the biggest challenge was to change myself. Chang[ing] myself in respecting people more, chang[ing] myself on learning more. ... The biggest challenge is to manage myself, my own person, that’s the biggest challenge for me”. Blake similarly recollected “to know [myself], ... to know what [my] limits are, what ... my goals and objectives [are], and how ... they apply to myself, my boss and my employees. ... How do I communicate, how do I interact with them, how do I listen to them and take their interests into account? ... How do I improve this?” Blake added “I like to be challenged and I like to learn something, to keep growing”, to keep evolving.

Susan similarly noted that the main challenge she faced in applying what she learned was herself. She explained that she needed to ensure that the “material was not placed on a shelf but was applied”. In terms of the Leadership Training Program itself, Susan noted that her main challenge was to come to terms with the differences in the conflict resolution diagnostic instrument results and how she perceived herself. Susan explained “the main challenge [was conflict resolution]. ... This [was] incredible ... to me. The reason is, I thought I was good, excellent at this and after doing this [course], it revealed that I have some work to do on this. I’m not that good. ... I’m working on it and I started here at work and I started at home too. ... I will be better”.

Bonnie, as noted earlier, believed that if a learner did not apply their learning “it is usually because of personal reasons”. She suggested that learners must “want to bring it back

and apply what [they] have learned”, suggesting the learners’ steadfastness in evolving or changing their behaviors. Finally, John suggested, as mentioned earlier, that as a learner “you have to be able to listen to [others] ... and you have to be able to factor them in and you have to in a sense try to understand, comprehend why this is, why they are taking that particular action”. He posited that learners must be open and flexible to do this. They must be sufficiently open and flexible to change their perspectives and modify their behaviors.

*Work Environment.*

Finally, the majority of the participants identified the work environment as a challenge to their transfer efforts. The work environment challenge stemmed from the organization’s culture and bureaucracy. In addressing the organization’s culture, John noted that an organization that does not accept employees’ ideas or new behaviors, inhibits transfer. He explained that in his environment, “any good idea has to come from the management team. ... Quite often when you are trying to promote something, they will need to modify, change or add to it to feel comfortable with it and it’s not necessarily positive or negative, it’s just the way things are”. He added that frequently, “it doesn’t matter how you communicate. It’s what you are communicating [that] the culture is not ready for”. John further described an inhibiting culture as one where employees’ learning mistakes were not easily forgiven, it was difficult for employees to experiment and there were “many clients with varied constraints, desires and expectations”.

Blake suggested that the culture was a major inhibiting factor to his transfer efforts. He explained “the culture is something that is very different [here]. ... We have professionals like lawyers and employees in the AS category, some have university, some high school and some have a hard time reading. ... The organizational culture is such that often you can not get the

training [you need. As well, sometimes managers] ... openly bash someone". Blake further described his culture as one of management not dealing effectively with low performing employees. Rather, "they choose to let things go, to pretend that situations do not exist and ignore bad behavior". Not wanting to create any waves they "let it go and they close an eye to things and then somebody else comes in and they inherit the problem that was created". He posited that employees' new ideas were also not welcome and the culture was very hard to change, as employees' application efforts were not always accepted. Blake recalled that even after the training "your boss may tell you to do it this way", regardless of the new behaviors that he learned. Exasperated Blake stated, "you can not instill new ideas into an organization like that!"

Bonnie recollected that the learners' managers and colleagues can impede learning and transfer. She recollected "I know here in our branch, the management [team] is very open and encourage training and maybe not all branches are like that". As well, managers and colleagues are not always open to the learners' new ways of doing things. Consequently, the learners "sort of don't have a chance to apply what [they] have learned. ... Managers don't make the environment conducive to be able to apply for whatever reason". Bonnie noted that another inhibiting factor was management not being "aware of what is going on and open, and ... recommend[ing that] people take training".

Susan recalled that an organizational factor that inhibited her transfer efforts, as mentioned earlier, was her manager not taking a more proactive role in her learning and transfer efforts. Susan was hopeful to engage in discussions about what she learned and how could apply her learning in her work practices. Finally, Janice posited that the management team needs to

understand that the department “needs continuous change. ... That’s the way to have a better work force”. She added that the management team “need[ed] to be more in tune with themselves and with their life balance in order to help further the learning for the rest of us. ... Without their support and this consciousness, it’s not going to facilitate the learning. ... You can’t just sing you have to dance too. ... [Bosses] who sing these tunes but [don’t] dance to them ... are not credible”.

In addressing the bureaucracy, Blake and John both noted that the organizational structure was not flexible and decisions were often taken only after significant committee deliberations. Blake suggested that the employees’ creativity was consequently, “stifled”.

Blake raised the bureaucracy issue as one of change being ushered in slowly, often after lengthy committee review. He explained that there are “so many bureaucratic processes that we have to look at before something is actually done. ... That in my mind affects transfer”. He added “the bureaucracy, the structure that is there, makes it hard sometimes to be flexible or to be creative because no matter what you want to do it has to go to one committee and then another committee, and it’s maybe two years later before its accepted. ... So, it’s like all the bureaucracy is a big challenge to apply something”.

John similarly noted that “there is always a very hierarchal way of looking at things” in the organization. He noted that there were different decision making levels and “some people at certain levels ... think that unless it (the idea) comes from the same level, it is not worth very much”. He added that “some people are very obvious about not even giving you the time. ... As soon as you’re finished [presenting], they say ok that’s fine, let’s go on to something else. They almost say let’s go on to something important. [But] it’s what you are communicating [that] the

culture is not ready for”. Finally, Janice noted “we have [a] bureaucracy but nothing like down town. It’s not a political bureaucracy. ... If I say something to [my boss], he trusts me implicitly. ... It’s conducive to my learning”, unlike the bureaucratic environment elsewhere.

In summary, the participants noted the importance of an open, positive, trusting and supportive culture. The supportive aspect of the culture concerned their managers taking the time to discuss with them the benefits of the course, what they learned, how their learning might be applied and possible job assignment opportunities. It also included their colleagues’ or staff members’ openness to hearing about what the participants learned and to their coaching efforts. In examining the specific support that the participants received from their managers, the majority received the most managerial support in the before and after program stages.

Three challenges, which inhibited the participants’ transfer efforts, were raised. Time was a challenge for the participants during all three training program stages. Before the course for example, one of the participants was aware of the work demands so he chose a shorter course, even though he was uncertain if the course would adequately address his learning needs. Evolving oneself as a learner related to the learners knowing themselves, developing their skills, and changing themselves, their attitudes and perspectives. Finally, the organization’s culture was inhibitive to transfer as new ideas or new ways of doing things were not accepted by the participants’ managers or peers, for example. The bureaucracy, in turn, was described as a challenge as a result of the inflexibility in the organizational structure and decisions being taken only after lengthy committee review.

Thus far this chapter has described the participants’ lived accounts of transfer from the perspective of why they believed that transfer occurred, when transfer entered their learning

experience, what their transfer experiences were and how they experienced transfer. Table 4 provides a summary of the variables that facilitated the participants' transfer efforts, by participant. The next section of this chapter explores and describes the participants' accounts of the possible interplay between the individuals' characteristics, training program's design and development features, and organizational climate characteristics, or the three primary transfer sources which facilitate or inhibit transfer.

### **Are there Interrelationships between the Individuals' Characteristics, Training Program's Design and Development Features, and Organizational Climate Characteristics?**

The participants described the possible interrelationships between the individuals' characteristics, training program's design and development features, and organizational climate characteristics in various ways, in both the interview and focus group discussions. The participants' responses fell under the general headings of the blending of their professional and personal needs, targeted training and employees' openness to their learning, and will be addressed sequentially in this section.

#### *Blending of Professional and Personal Needs*

John, Susan and Bonnie all described the interplay between the individuals' characteristics, training program's features and organizational climate characteristics as the relevance of the training program's content to their professional, personal and social lives. John described the interplay as "something that is very useful to me [personally] and very useful to the type of work that I do and very useful, I think, to the organization". John explained that when "an individual learns something, he feels better, feels more comfortable ... with it (training material) and ... appl[ies] it in [his] day to day work environment. ... For the organization, that means a more effective employee".

Susan similarly described the interplay as the course content's "application to [her] professional, personal and social life". Susan posited that by addressing situations that were relevant to her professional, personal and social life, during the training program, she enhanced her application efforts both at work and at home. Susan explained that such training "situations remind us that we all live. We all have to go through this on a daily basis not just 9-5, but it happens everywhere. Even talking to my children and ... my elders". Bonnie, while noting that

**Table 4**  
**Factors that Contributed to the Participants' Transfer of Learning, by Participant**

Participant/ Transfer Factor	John	Jared	Bonnie	Janice	Susan	Blake	Joseph
<b>Individual Char.</b>							
- initial motivator	manager	self (course's reputation)	self (negative experience)	self (career decision)	manager	manager	self (improve communications)
- course expectations	met to an extent	met to an extent	generally met	met	met	hard to say	met
- consciously sought to apply	yes	no	yes	yes	yes	yes	no
- abilities and skills	open minded; adaptable; g. listener; reflective; innovative; proactive; self-discip.	open minded; flexible; g. organizational skills; courage; risk taking; proactive; self-discip.	open minded; positive attitude; expectations; proactive; self-discip.	open minded; g. listener; proactive; self-discip.	open minded; positive attitude; eager to learn; interest in subject; reflection; proactive; self-discip.	open minded; g. listener; interest in subject; choice of program; expectations; proactive; self-discip.	positive attitude; interest in subject; choice of program; proactive; self-discip.
- the how of their transfer process	transformational	informational; transformational?	informational; self-directed	transformational; situated cognition	self-directed; situated cognition	self-directed; situated cognition	informational
<b>Training Program</b>							

Participant/ Transfer Factor	John	Jared	Bonnie	Janice	Susan	Blake	Joseph
- most useful course methods	theory, learn by doing, interaction	instruction, interaction, theory	theory, team exercises, interaction	self-reflection, interaction, mock interviews	theory, diagnostic instruments, interaction, exercises	diagnostic instruments, theory, work related problems, case studies, interaction, videos	team exercises, references
- most useful training methods in general	real-life experience, videos, role playing	learn by doing, structured learning environment	learn by doing, real work problems	learn by doing, reflection	interaction, learn by doing, reference materials	work related exercises, videos, interaction	real work problems, case studies
- length of course	2	3	2	10	10	3	2
- when transfer entered their learning experience	during and after	after	before and after	during and after	before and during	during and after	not aware
<b>Organizational Characteristics</b>							
- supportive manager	before	before	before and after	before, during and after	before, during and after	before and after	before
- supp. colleagues & staff	not mentioned	not mentioned	yes	yes	yes	yes	not mentioned
- had a mentor	no	no	no	yes	yes	no	no
- had a PLP	no	no	no	no	yes	yes	no
- supportive work environment	no	yes	yes	yes	yes	no	yes

she was “not sure if I can explain it (the interplay), I know it works”, described the interplay as the blending of her professional and personal needs. She recounted that she participated in the training program not only for her professional development but also “for what I could do to improve myself as an individual, ... [in] my personal life”. She added that having a two day course in town, close to her office, was also important to her in meeting her family responsibilities. She recounted “I have a large family and I find that I don’t want to go

somewhere for a week or two weeks. ... A couple of days is just perfect”.

### *Targeted Training*

John and Joseph both described the possible interplay as targeted training programs. John, in addition to the relevance of the training to his professional and personal life, explained that the interplay depended on “getting results” through targeted training programs. He recounted that an organization must identify and plan the necessary training needs, ensuring “that people take the right type of training, and to the detail and extent that is needed for ... [the] organization”. He added that PLPs, changing the managers’ and employees’ attitudes to ensure that learning was regarded as “valued and useful for the organization”, and assisting employees in their learning efforts were all important to the interplay issue. Joseph, on the other hand, posited that “theoretically it [the interplay] makes sense”. For Joseph, the interplay was very much driven by the type of work that the employees did. Joseph recounted that “the work we do or at least I do becomes so diverse that you may not be able to use it right away. ... Application becomes a challenge. Really, the course you’ve taken, how do you apply it?” He explained that targeted training such as a local area network (lan) computer course, was “more likely to be used right away”. There was a direct link between the training and work demands. Employees are, consequently, “more likely” to use the training “right away”. He suggested that the training that he received tended to be more general type training, not targeted to his particular job demands. Joseph added “hopefully, that information (the course material) pops up or I can access it”, as required.

### *Employees’ Openness and Attitudes Towards Learning*

Blake, Janice and Jared all regarded the interplay as the employees’ openness and

attitudes towards their learning. Blake noted that “obviously there is a connection between the three of them (the transfer clusters)” and posited that employees need to regard their learning as continuous, “simply learning on a course [is] not enough”. Employees must “be open to what [they are] learning and their minds [have] to be going all of the time”, both in the training program and in their work environment. He added that they must see “new things that are applicable to [their] work and if [they] want to take it a step further [and] want to learn something different, [they can] think [of] what [other] courses will help [them]”. Blake concluded “so I think all three come together. Take a bit from each [transfer source] and come out with something a little greater, ... tying them all together and apply it. It’s like making a recipe. It all comes together”. For Janice, the interplay was one of:

“the combination of how one works with the other. I mean my attitude and my boss’ attitude has got a lot to do [with] the way I’m going to learn. If I’m going into that training because I really want to learn something and I think I can do better at it and my boss says no you don’t need this we’ve got too much work, I’m not going to live the same experience at all as I would have lived it if he would have said go for it and I believe in you. ... I think you can benefit the organization. ... The interplay with the course also, I mean my attitude is going to be influenced by my boss, he will influence the way I’m going to learn. So you have to mesh the three together. I don’t think you can look at the three separately. ... It’s complex. ... You change one element [and] it changes the whole scenario.

Finally, Jared, while addressing the openness of the learner, focused more on the employees’ belief system. He stated:

if you're talking about how I process information, how I relate it to the workplace, how I relate it to myself, everyone approaches the world every day with their own belief system about how the world works. ... When we take a course and if [we're] open to ... learning, [we] are open to absorbing new ideas, learning new information, then it adds to that belief system, it effects it in some way or ... you just reject it. ... Your belief system plays on what you're doing. [Learners are subsequently], altered a little bit from the experience of a course. So, [their] altered state is applied to the work that has to be done.

One focus group participant aptly suggested that the interplay discussion appeared to be “a matter of the assumptions you are bringing to your perspective. It really depends on your starting point”. For that participant, transfer was primarily dependent on the individual learner. He had assumed that the organization was already supportive of employees' transfer efforts and explained that the individuals' characteristics were the most important transfer source because “if you don't have that, if you don't have the receptivity, nothing really much will happen. But it has to work in conjunction with the training program so that there's a reciprocity if you like between the person's characteristics ... and the training program. They have to work together”. He suggested that “the organizational climate is the least important [factor. ... It] shouldn't even enter the picture. ... There is a link between the organizational climate and the training program because if the organizational climate wasn't at least saying ya, we recognize there [are] problems and we should have training programs, you wouldn't have the training program”. He added that “the individuals' characteristics, building on the training program, will change the organizational climate eventually” and concluded that once the organization is supportive of the training, “from that point on, the individuals' characteristics are the most important” transfer source.

Many of the focus group participants had difficulty identifying if one transfer source was more important than the others or if there was indeed an interplay. One participant suggested that maybe the most important source was the organization, arguing that an “organization should be supportive of the learning organization ... [and put in place support] mechanisms [such] as a good training program, ... assignments, [and] Personal Learning Plans (PLP)”. Another participant mentioned that the organizational climate influenced what training programs were provided departmentally, as well as the program content. Finally, one participant suggested that “the training program and the individuals’ characteristics [were] the most important” transfer sources. He similarly suggested that the PLPs were an important initiative in facilitating employees’ transfer efforts, as they “change the climate, ... the learning and [the] mentality”.

Other participants however, recounted that all three transfer sources were equally important. One participant stated “all three of them are important. I can’t attribute one being more important than the other one. All three of them have to play and the combination has to be a good combination ... in order for the transfer ... or the learning to be effective. ... One is not more important than the other”. Another participant added to that position suggesting “it’s a synergy. It’s how they intertwine together and how they, like it’s the whole combination that will make it work or not. If you have a very passionate individual and a good organization, and the training is really boring, its not going to go anywhere. ... I think the three have to be equal because one will influence the other”. This participant noted that conversely, an individual with “a poor attitude ... [who] goes into this excellent training, ... and the energy is kind of contagious, ... this person will change out of this and they will see a different perspective. So, ... the training can play an equal role”.

After much discussion, one participant suggested:

the three [factors] definitely influence one another. If you put a person in one organization with one training it will make one result. Leave the same training in the same climate with a different individual and the result will be pretty much different. ...

The three of them, the three elements, definitely impact on one another. The minute you change one of the components, it's a different result, it's that complex.

On the basis of the foregoing discussion, the interrelationships between the individuals' characteristics, training program's design and development features, and organizational climate characteristics were not easy for the participants to describe and their responses were quite varied, both during the interview and focus group discussions. Three of the participants described the interplay between the three transfer sources as the blending of their professional, personal and social lives. Two of the participants described the interplay as targeted training and finally, three of the participants described it as the employees' openness and attitudes towards learning.

As an overall summary, this chapter attempted to weave the participants' perceptions of and experiences with transfer into a transfer story. A story that was predicated on the participants' lived accounts of their transfer experiences. The participants' own voices, in rich detail, were heard. In many cases, those voices expressed the diversity of the participants' transfer experiences.

This chapter wove the participants' transfer stories together by first exploring and describing the why of their experiences, followed by a description of the individuals' characteristics - the what of the participants' transfer experiences, their motivations,

expectations, attitudes and skills, as well as the how of their experiences. The chapter further explored and described the what of the training program's design and development features, and when transfer entered the participants' learning experience. Finally, it described the what of the organizational climate characteristics that facilitated their transfer efforts, and the how of the possible interrelationships between the three transfer sources.

Now that we have an understanding of the participants' lived transfer experiences, our attention turns to the interpretation of the findings. Chapter five interprets, through the lenses of the transfer of learning and adult learning literature lenses, the findings of this chapter.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### Interpretation of the Data

The purpose of this chapter, as with all “phenomenological research and writing is to construct an interpretation of ... [the participants’ transfer] experiences” (van Manen, 1997, p. 41). This chapter interprets the findings of the participants’ lived accounts of their transfer experiences and the possible interplay between the three transfer sources, through the lenses of the transfer research and adult learning literatures. The whether and why of the participants’ transfer experiences will be interpreted first, followed by a discussion of the eight main themes and the possible interrelationships between the three primary transfer sources. An overall summary of the discussions of this chapter then follows.

#### Did Transfer Occur?

*Your aspirations are your possibilities. Dr. Samuel Johnson.*

All of the participants, with the exception of Joseph, experienced positive transfer in their work, family and/or community. The changes in their professional practices and personal lives involved the application of new or former knowledge, attitudes and/or skills, or changes in their cognitive, effective or psychomotor abilities, respectively (Ford, 1994; Garavaglia, 1993; Guskey, 2000; Kraiger, Ford & Salas, 1993). In fact, many of the participants cited examples of changes in all three areas in their work activities and appeared to have effectively applied the knowledge, skills or attitudes gained during the training program in their workplace efforts, in keeping with the first part of the transfer definition employed in this research. The majority of the participants further transferred their learning to the context of their personal lives - family and community. This latter finding provides some indication of the participants’ competency at adapting their learning to the different contexts of their lives.

Joseph was the only participant who was unable to cite an example of an explicit change in either his professional practice or personal life. While Joseph recalled learning how to write and communicate for a purpose, he could not or was reluctant to say whether he had consciously applied that information in his work activities. Perhaps Joseph, being an older employee, had taken similar courses in the past and in view of his general interest in reading may have sufficiently augmented his knowledge of the subject, resulting in “the 20% or so ... [being] maybe new information, ... new knowledge”. Further, Joseph recounted that “most of the time there’s nothing concrete or ... that you [can] apply immediately”, upon your return to the workplace. He explained “my work is such that I don’t need that information right away”. Joseph’s belief that most courses only offered a 20% margin of new material may have resulted in him not recognizing new application opportunities while learning, and by not needing the “information right away”, his newly learned behaviors likely diminished over time. In fact, Kemerer (1991) posited that “delayed application reduces transfer” (p. 74). Moreover, Joseph did not consciously seek to apply his learning. In fact, he didn’t “think of applying per say”. This characteristic may have diminished the likelihood of him transferring his learning (Ottoson, 1997). All of these factors likely contributed to Joseph’s non application of the training materials in his professional and personal life.

While the majority of the participants transferred the course content to their work activities, in keeping with the first part of the transfer definition employed in this research, the participants’ perceptions of their enhanced job performance, the second part of the definition, is discussed in the following section.

The participants’ perceptions of their enhanced job performance were varied. The degree

of their enhanced performance appeared to rest on a number of factors. One such factor was the participants' ability to clearly demarcate what they learned in the course and applied in their work activities. For Susan, Janice and Jared, this demarcation appeared to be quite obvious, from "absolutely", to "definitely", to "made a positive contribution", respectively. Blake and Joseph, on the other hand, were unable to attribute their performance enhancements to the one course alone due to their general interest in learning. For Bonnie, it was partially the course and partially "just experience" that made the difference. Finally, for John, it was a matter of the lack of practice time, during the training, to become comfortable with the knowledge, skills or attitudes. This lack of practice opportunities consequently, minimized his application efforts upon his return to the workplace.

Another contributing factor in the participants' perceptions of their enhanced job performance appeared to have been the length of the courses. Susan and Janice for example, who participated in the 10 day Leadership course, were both absolutely positive that the course had enhanced their job performance. The longer course may have provided them with sufficient opportunities to really understand the material, discuss the material with the other course participants and practice their newly learned behaviors before returning to the workplace, key considerations in the participants' transfer experiences, as will be discussed throughout this chapter. Had the communications course been longer than two days John for example, may have had more opportunities to practice his new skills and have felt more comfortable applying the course content in his work activities. In fact, Blake during the narrative interview commented that the POMP was condensed from a five to a three day course and posited that all of the material that had to be covered in the shortened course, may have affected his transfer efforts.

Moreover, the course content in this research may have been similar to that of courses that the participants had attended in the past or due to their general interest in reading, were somewhat familiar with. As a consequence, the participants may have been unable to attribute their enhanced job performance solely to the courses in question. Finally, Janice's and Susan's position as a manager in the organization may have been a contributing factor as they were empowered to make decisions, including changing their job behaviors as a result of their learning and transfer efforts (Ottoson, 1995b).

Interestingly, in more closely examining the participants' accounts of why they believed that transfer had occurred, the majority of them cited different examples of their application efforts. The examples cited appeared to be relevant to the individuals' particular learning needs. As will be recalled, while Janice and Susan for example, both participated in the Leadership training, Janice recollected that she applied knowledge related to her strategic planning efforts, had enhanced her communication skills and changed her perceptions about her staff members. Susan, on the other hand, focused on her conflict resolution skills, and on her perfectionism's effect on her staff members. This finding was in keeping with Knowles' (1980) and Tough's (1979) view that adult learners typically learn in response to the demands of their current life situations, with the intention of applying that learning when performing an activity or achieving something in their work, personal or social lives. This matter will be discussed more extensively in the Desire to Learn theme section of this chapter.

Further, the communications and interpersonal-relationship aspects of the courses were cited most frequently by the participants as examples of their application efforts, both in their work, family relations and community lives. While all of the courses in question had a

communications element to them, communications was not the focus of the POMP nor of the Leadership training. This finding may be providing some evidence that communications and interpersonal-relationship skills are essential competencies for the workplace, requiring the learners to adapt their learning efforts to meet the specific demands of their workplace activities. Moreover, the participants' ability to transfer their learning in their personal lives further addressed their competency at adapting their learning, an important competency for learners in the knowledge based economy (Bassi, Benson & Cheney, 1996; Ford & Weissbein, 1997). The participants' ability to transfer their learning to the different contexts of their lives was important to their overall learning and transfer efforts. As Caffarella (1994) posited "assisting people to make changes is what transfer is all about - changes in themselves, other people, practices, organizations, and/or society" (p. 108).

In examining the participants' accounts from the perspective of the transfer indicators, as outlined by Ford and Weissbein (1997) and Baldwin and Ford (1988), for transfer to have occurred the learned behaviors must be: a) generalized to job contexts, settings, people and situations which differ from those of the training program and b) maintained over a period of time on the job. Further, the behaviors must be adapted from the training program to a novel work situation (Ford & Weissbein, 1997). Due to the courses being Communications, People Oriented Management and Leadership type training programs, one can argue that the participants were indeed required to generalize and adapt the training program content to their job contexts. They were consequently, required to modify the knowledge, skills or attitudes learned in the course to meet their specific job demands (Laker, 1990). Both Jared and Joseph provided some insight into the generalizability and adaptability issues in their work activities. Jared suggested

that employees' transfer opportunities vary and depend on the:

nature of the work that's involved. ... [If the work is] very process oriented in terms of physical outputs, running machines that fill bottles of coke [for example], people ... [receive] specific training on how to operate equipment, do certain things, how to check for quality, how to critically examine their own work, [and] how to critically examine the work of others. ... What has been learned has direct application in the person's job. ... Here [in this department], we learn something that's more abstract, what shall I say, policy development or some sort of analytical context. I think the way in which training is applied is much more subtle [here].

Joseph similarly noted that most of the training that he receives is "more general training [in nature], unlike lan support [which] was more likely to be used right away", or direct application with little or no modification (Laker, 1990). He explained that "general training is not directly applied, it's in the back of the individual's mind. ... So, the work we do or at least I do, becomes so diverse that you may not be able to use it right away. ... If its general training, which is what I tend to have, its in the back of the mind. These are things you should look at and hopefully that information pops up or I can access it [as needed]".

One can posit that far transfer occurred as the participants were required to apply what they learned in novel work situations (Laker, 1990). Their transfer efforts were not simply a matter of the training program situations closely mirroring their work situations. Further, due to the analytical, communications, negotiating, leadership and managerial skill requirements of the participants' jobs, the linkages between what they learned in the training program and applied in their work activities were not always direct. Vertical transfer, which requires employees to

significantly adapt the knowledge, skills or attitudes to fit their specific workplace conditions, therefore, likely occurred (Milheim, 1994). To extend this line of thinking, one can also argue that high road transfer, which requires trainees to be mindful of their learning and to abstract the knowledge, skills or attitudes from one context to application in a new context, also likely occurred (Perkins and Salomon, 1998).

In terms of the maintenance of the participants' transfer of learning, due to the research interviews being conducted three to six months following the training program, it can be argued that the transferred knowledge, skills or attitudes was maintained on the job for at least that period of time. A period of time that was in keeping with the commonly held practice of "three months or more" (Kirkpatrick, 1987, p. 313).

Finally, on the basis of the findings, the transfer of learning definition employed in this research requires revisiting. Many of the participants noted that the course either reinforced what they already knew (Jared and Joseph), the course in conjunction with their general life experiences (Bonnie), or their general interest in learning (Blake) may have accounted for the changes in their behaviors. The transfer definition, therefore, appears to need to take into account the notions of previous training experience or prior learned knowledge and skills, as well as a general reference to learning activities rather than strictly "a training program".

As will be recalled, Annett and Sparrow (1985) defined transfer as the benefits obtained from having had previous training experience when acquiring a new or adapting an old skill to a new situation. Taylor (2000) defined transfer as occurring when prior knowledge and skills affected the way new knowledge and skills were learned and performed. Finally, Broad (1997) defined transfer as the effective and continuing application by learners of knowledge and skills

gained in learning activities to the performance of their jobs or other responsibilities. While Broad's definition captures some of the additional element requirements quite succinctly, it does not address the notions of adapting an old skill or prior learned knowledge and skills. A more comprehensive definition may be as follows: prior learned or new knowledge, skills or attitudes that an individual gains from learning activities that are effectively applied in the performance of their work, personal and community responsibilities.

The next section of this chapter interprets the findings related to the participants' lived transfer accounts, as captured in the eight major themes and clustered according to the individual's characteristics, training program's design and development features, and organizational climate characteristics. It should be noted that, while each learning theory is relevant to the discussion of the findings, the adult learning theory that has the most explanatory power for each cluster of themes will be expounded on, in order to provide a more fullsome understanding of the adult learning perspective.

### **Individuals' Characteristics**

*They can because they think they can. Virgil.*

This section of the chapter interprets the findings which cluster around the individual's characteristics. These two themes are the desire to learn and how transfer occurred. As mentioned, a greater emphasis is placed on the adult learning theory that has the most explanatory power in addressing the findings. A summary of the discussions then follows.

In examining the desire to learn theme findings through the transfer of learning literature lens, all of the participants at a more general level were motivated to participate in the training program, in order to meet their work demands. These motivations related to enhancing their

knowledge of a particular subject, developing their skills or changing their attitudes. This finding was in keeping with Clark, Dobbins and Ladd's (1993), Mathieu, Tannenbaum and Salas' (1992), Noe and Schmitt's (1986), and Tesluk, Farr, Mathieu and Vance's (1995) transfer research. Their research found that trainees' motivations such as their job involvement or career planning, and their positive perceptions of the training program, in terms of knowledge and skill development, were positively related to transfer. "Perceived job and career utility were significant predictors of training motivation" (Clark, et al., p. 302).

The transfer research also found that individuals who were intrinsically motivated to learn the course content and to transfer it to the workplace, who sought to exercise control over their work activities and their performance, and who perceived the benefits of the training to their job and careers were more likely to transfer their learning (Faction, Dobbins, Russell, Ladd & Kudisch, 1995; Noe, 1986; Noe & Schmitt, 1986; Noe & Wilk, 1993; Tesluk, Farr, Mathieu & Vance, 1995).

At a more micro level, Janice's desire to learn more about leadership for purposes of making a career decision was in keeping with Clark, et al.'s (1993) and Noe's (1986) research findings. This research found that the trainees' desire to engage in career planning, career exploration or a different work level that might be more fulfilling for them, were more motivated to learn. Jared's motivation of hearing that the course was worthwhile, was also confirmed in the transfer research. Faction, Dobbins, Russell, Ladd and Kudisch (1995) found that a training program's positive reputation was related to the trainee's pre-training motivation.

Bonnie's negative work experience, and Blake and Jared's desire to deal more effectively with employee performance problems, were validated by Smith-Jentsch, Jentsch, Payne and

Salas' (1996) research. Smith-Jentsch, et al. found that trainees who had a negative experience before the training were more motivated to do well in the program, and were more likely to learn and transfer the program content to their work activities. Smith-Jentsch et al. posited that "negative events may actually increase the trainee's receptivity to new ideas offered in training, heighten attention to behavioral objectives and increase self-analysis of training performance, resulting in better retention of skills" (p. 111).

John, Blake and Susan, on the other hand, were all encouraged by their managers to participate in the respective courses. Unlike the transfer research, which found a positive relationship between an individual's choice of training program and transfer (Facteau, Dobbins, Russell, Ladd & Kudisch, 1995; Mathieu, Tannenbaum & Salas, 1992; Baldwin & Magjuka, 1991), these participants all cited examples of transfer to their work activities. The difference in this research's findings may be due to the participants viewing their manager's recommendation for the training as highly credible and, therefore, of benefit to their jobs and careers, as cited in Clark, et al.'s (1993) transfer research findings. The difference may also be due to the participants' own motivational factors, that of their desire to enhance their job performance (Clark, et al., 1993). Blake, for example, sought to deal more effectively with employee performance problems, while Susan sought to enhance her leadership knowledge and skills. Finally, John sought to become a more effective communicator, a key consideration for his work.

All of the participants' course expectations were met. While it was difficult to assess the participants' level of motivation, Facteau, Dobbins, Russell, Ladd and Kudisch (1995) found that trainees who had a fairly high level of motivation to attend a course and learn were "more likely to indicate benefits from the training" (p. 15). On the basis of these findings, Janice and Susan

may have been the more highly motivated as they both noted an absolute linkage between the course and their enhanced performance. Finally, the extent to which the trainees' course expectations were met, was positively related to changes that they effected in their workplace activities (Tannenbaum, Mathieu, Salas & Cannon-Bowers, 1991). John provided an excellent example of this latter finding as his course expectations were met "only to an extent". Due to insufficient practice opportunities during the training, John did not feel confident to go back to the office and "really" apply his learning.

Many of the identified attitudes and skills were also confirmed in the transfer research. Mathieu and Martineau's (1997) research for example, found that the trainees' openness to the training experience and their perceptions of the training as an opportunity to learn facilitated the trainees' transfer efforts. Mathieu, Tannenbaum and Salas (1992) similarly found that the trainees' positive attitudes at the beginning of the course and their positive reactions to the course, were related to their positive post training attitudes.

The participants' notion of an attitude of can do was captured in the transfer research under the concept of self efficacy. The transfer research found that employees who possessed self efficacy or an attitude of can do, as expressed by Bonnie and Janice, were more likely to take responsibility for their personal development and to transfer their learning (Noe & Wilk, 1993). Self-efficacy, defined as "an important motivational construct [that] influences individual choices, goals, emotional reactions, effort, coping and persistence" (Gist & Mitchell, 1992, p. 86), is the individuals' belief that they are capable of performing a specific task (Gist, Schwoerer & Benson, 1989). Noe and Wilk's (1993) research further found that the higher the trainees' level of self-efficacy or attitude of can do, the more positive their attitudes towards learning, the

greater their awareness of their developmental needs and the stronger their beliefs that they would receive benefits from participating in the developmental activity.

The trainees' interest in, choice of and decision to participate in a training program, as noted by Blake and Joseph, were also related to positive transfer (Baldwin & Magjuka, 1991; Mathieu, Tannenbaum & Salas, 1992). The transfer research, in addressing Jared's and Joseph's notion of the learners proactively seeking out application opportunities, found that the opportunities that the employees had to actually put the knowledge and skills into practice in the workplace, as well as their level of self-efficacy and confidence in performing the trained tasks, were related to transfer (Ford & Quinones, 1992; Ford, Smith, Segó & Quinones, 1993).

Finally, the participants' notions of self discipline and ability to reflect were also confirmed under the metacognitive ability learning strategy, or the individuals' knowledge of and control over their cognitions, including the planning, monitoring and revising of goal appropriate behavior. This learning strategy was related to positive transfer (Ford, Smith, Weissbein, Gully & Salas, 1998). The transfer research did not however, address the participants' notions of risk taking, note taking, flexibility and listening skills.

The transfer research described the how of the transfer process in a variety of ways. It was described as a metacognitive ability learning strategy or the individuals' knowledge of and control over their cognitions, including the planning, monitoring and revising of goal appropriate behavior. The metacognitive ability learning strategy, in turn, was related to the mastery orientation. In the mastery orientation, the learners focused on developing their new skills, understanding their tasks and achieving self-referenced standards for mastery, similar to the analytical (Janice and John) and action oriented (Blake and Susan) transfer processes. In

contrast, in the performance orientation the learners sought to achieve public success by performing better than others (Ford, Smith, Weissbein, Gully & Salas, 1998). Kozlowski, Gully, Brown, Salas and Nason (2001) reported similar findings.

The how of the transfer process was also described by Gist and Bavetta (1990). Their research examined self management and goal setting training designs as means of facilitating transfer. In the self management training, they found that the learners focused on their learning, identified obstacles to their success and self monitored the implementation of their plans, similar to the analytical and action oriented processes. This process was important to the individuals in performing novel and complex tasks, generalizing the learned skills to the transfer tasks and achieving the desired outcomes. In the goal setting training, on the other hand, the learners directed their attention and action towards the fulfillment of their goals. The goal setting training affected the level of effort expended on a task and the learners' persistence until their goals were reached. Gist, Stevens and Bavetta (1991) reported similar findings.

Finally, the how of transfer was described in terms of the low and high road transfer mechanisms. The low-road mechanism "involve[d] the spontaneous, automatic transfer of highly practiced skills, with little need for reflective thinking". The high-road mechanism, on the other hand, "involve[d] the explicit conscious formulation of abstraction in one situation that allow[ed] making a connection to another [situation]" (Salomon & Perkins, 1989, p. 118). Salomon and Perkins posited that in low road transfer, the cognitive element was "learned and practiced in a variety of contexts until it [became] automatic and somewhat flexible because of the variety" (p. 120). The key aspect of the low road transfer process was varied practice until automaticity was reached. What transferred in low road transfer was unintentional performance, based on

reinforcement.

In high road transfer, mindful abstraction was key. Mindfulness involved the learners' metacognitive abilities while abstraction involved both the "decontextualization and re-representation" of the information in new and more general forms (Salomon & Perkins, 1989, p. 125). Perkins and Salomon (1988) suggested that high road transfer "always involve[d] reflective thought in abstracting from one context and seeking connections with others" (p. 26). Salomon and Perkins (1989) found that high road transfer predicted generalizability and noted "the greater the abstraction, the greater range of instances it subsumes, ... the greater the range to which it might be applied" (p. 128). High road transfer bridged between contexts remote from one another but required "the effort of deliberate abstraction and connection-making, and the ingenuity to make the abstractions and discover the connections" (Perkins & Salomon, 1988, p. 27), similar to the self management and metacognitive ability learning strategies.

The adult learning literature provides a different perspective on the desire to learn and how transfer occurred findings. The adult learning literature for example, characterizes all of the participants' motivations, attitudes and skills as those of a self directed learner. The how of the participants' transfer process however, is associated with all three adult learning theories, to varying degrees. The adult learning theories, as will be shown, provide a more comprehensive understanding to the individuals' characteristics findings.

Generally speaking, adults learn when they have the intent to learn (Knowles, 1989; Tough, 1979). Adults typically undertake learning with the intention of applying their learning either when performing an action or achieving something, such as a higher education program (Tough, 1979). This learning is generally problem or performance centered, in response to the

demands of their current life situations or their responsibilities “as workers, spouses, parents and citizens” (Knowles, 1980, p. 45).

As noted, the learning theory that has the most explanatory power in addressing the desire to learning theme findings is the self directed learning theory. In examining the participants’ motivations or “the perceived value and anticipated success of the learners’ goals at the time that learning is initiated” (Caffarella, 1993, p. 29), the majority of the participants expressed the self directed learning (SDL) characteristics in terms of their interest in learning, autonomy in identifying their learning goals, decision to participate in the course, and taking the initiative to obtain course approval from their managers, as will be discussed later (Brookfield, 1993; Chovenac, 1998; Hammond & Collins, 1991). Even when the courses were at their managers’ suggestion, the participants diagnosed their specific learning goals or career planning needs, based on the competencies that they wanted to develop or the changes that they wanted to effect in their work activities (Candy, 1991; Hammond & Collins, 1991; Knowles, 1975; Tough, 1979). Joseph was the only exception to this latter characteristic as his learning needs were not specifically diagnosed but rather, they were quite general. They were, quite simply, “to improve [his] communications”. Joseph, unlike the other participants, did not identify specific aspects of his communications knowledge, skills or attitudes that required further development or change.

Further, the majority of the participants appeared ready to learn, to cope more effectively with their work and personal situations, and to have sought meaningful and worthwhile learning outcomes (Garrison, 1997; Knowles, 1989; Tough, 1979). Outcomes which were relevant to their life tasks or problems, relevant to their work and personal lives. The majority of the participants also appeared to have the confidence, willingness and capacity to self-manage their

own learning activities, analyzing, diagnosing, planning and evaluating their own learning experience (Hiemstra & Brockett, 1994; Knowles, 1980). They also appeared to be active and informed learners who were intrinsically driven to learn and transfer their learning (Caffarella, 1993; Merriam & Cafferalla, 1991). Many of the participants' motivations were associated with them seeking to meet the demands of their work environment. This finding will, therefore, be further discussed in the Organizational Climate Characteristics section.

The SDL theory further addresses all of the identified attitudes and skills. Self-directed learners have been described as self-disciplined, proactive inquirers, who are competent, analytical, reflective, self aware, flexible, and open, ready and intrinsically motivated to learn. They also possess strong skills in listening, note taking and risk taking. They have further been cast as possessing a positive self-concept, and independent yet interdependent. They exercise freedom of choice, follow through with their learning decisions and seek to apply their learning (Brookfield, 1993; Garrison, 1997).

Self directed learners take responsibility for constructing personal meaning through critical reflection and for confirming their learning through collaborative or social activities (Garrison, 1997). These learners solicit help from various learning sources such as other individuals, books or videos, and have strong skills in performing the learning activity and establishing feedback mechanisms (Brookfield, 1993; Knowles, 1975; Tough, 1979). Self directed learners are genuinely interested in the subject and have an attitude of can do, view problems as challenges rather than obstacles, and place a particular emphasis on hands on learning and practice opportunities (Garrison, 1997; Hiemstra & Brockett, 1994; Merriam & Caffarella, 1999). Self directed learners also need to understand how the knowledge, skills or

attitudes have application in the various contexts of their lives (Brookfield, 1993; Candy, 1991).

Adult learners who are intrinsically motivated, open minded and reflective, exercise free choice, have an interest in the subject, and possess the will power to follow through and apply their learning typically, tend to learn, retain and make use of what they learn better and longer (Caffarella, 1993; Knowles, 1975). Moreover, adult learners who are self confident and possess organizational skills, a positive attitude and an attitude of can do, also generally possess the ability to continuously learn throughout their lives. The ability to continuously learn is an important ability for the rapidly changing workforce (Cranton, 1998; Garrison, 1997; Hiemstra & Brockett, 1994).

No one particular adult learning theory however, explained the how transfer occurred theme. Rather, the three theories account for different aspects of the participants' transfer processes. For example, the transformational learning theory primarily addressed the analytical process, the self directed learning theory the action oriented process and the situated cognition theory, the mentoring and coaching aspects of the participants' accounts. The three learning theories will, therefore, form part of the how transfer occurred discussion which follows.

Transformational learning has been described as a "rational, analytical, and cognitive process" that is characterized as a "rational, analytical, and social" process (Grabove, 1997, p. 90). Janice and John's process, which involved a more cognitive and analytical based approach, as well as discussions with others, was very much in keeping with these aspects of the transformational learning theory. Their process also included their desire and efforts to apply what they learned through self reflection, dialogue and making conscious efforts to change their previous behaviors and perceptions. Critical reflection on one's assumptions, dialoguing with

others to validate one's thinking and taking action are essential characteristics of the transformational learning process (Mezirow, 1997b).

Janice and John also appeared to actively seek, through rational thought and reflection, to revise their assumptions, to make a shift in their perspectives or behaviors, and to consequently change themselves by correcting distortions in their beliefs, values or attitudes (Baumgartner, 2001; Clark, 1993; Mezirow, 1990; Scott, 1998; Sokol & Cranton, 1998). Transformational learning changes the "way people see themselves and their world" (Baumgartner, 2001, p. 16). Both Janice and John appeared to want to make such a shift in their perspectives or behaviors and in so doing, transform how they viewed themselves, their work context and their role within that context, and to take action on the basis of those views, in keeping with the transformational learning theory (Mezirow, 1991).

Blake and Susan's transfer process, on the other hand, involved a more action oriented process and was very much in keeping with the self-directed learning (SDL) theory. Their approach involved for example, taking notes, periodically referring back to the reference materials, reading additional materials, asking questions during the training program, discussing and sharing information with others, holding weekly meetings and putting their learning into practice. Activities which are primarily in keeping with the SDL characteristics. As discussed earlier, self directed learners have been cast as disciplined, competent, analytical, independent yet interdependent learners, capable of developing their own criteria for evaluating their learning efforts, and self-managing their learning activities. They also confirm their learning through collaborative activities and establish feedback mechanisms, whether with their colleagues as in Blake and Susan's case, or through a mentoring relationship as in Susan's case (Candy, 1991;

Knowles, 1975; Tough, 1979).

From the situated cognition perspective, Janice and Susan both established a relationship with a mentor who would guide them in their career development. They also coached their staff members. Mentoring and coaching are important aspects of the situated cognition learning process as mentors, coaches or more experienced learners assist other learners in developing specific skills and competencies, within a particular context of practice (Merriam & Caffarella, 1999; Wilson, 1993). Formal and informal mentoring, coaching and role modeling all provide learners with real-world, context based learning (Brown, Collins & Duguid, 1989; Hansman, 2001). This learning is important to the learners in their “performance of the new tasks and ... functioning within the community of practice” (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 53). Further, the majority of the participants sought to discuss situations with their colleagues and to solicit feedback on their possible application efforts, key aspects of all three learning theories (Merriam & Caffarella, 1999; Mezirow, 1997b).

Finally, Jared, Bonnie and Joseph’s transfer process was described as an unconscious process, akin to “an epiphany”. This process, which involved the learners making the connection between what they learned as it became relevant in the performance of their work activities, was not in keeping with the three learning theories in question. Jared, Bonnie and Joseph’s process appeared to be akin to informational learning or learning which was additive in nature. Informational learning “changes ... what we know” as opposed for example, to transformational learning which “changes the way people see themselves and their world ... it changes ... how we know” (Baumgartner, 2001, p. 16). It is also possible that these participants’ learning “fit comfortably in their existing frames of reference” (Mezirow, 1997a, p. 7). They did not,

therefore, seek to be analytical or action oriented in their transfer process. Jared, in fact, provided a very good illustration of this latter interpretation. He recounted “I think for immediate change, immediate action, it would have to be groundbreaking, it would have to be ah geeze, I’ve been doing this all wrong. ... [It] would have to be ... so overwhelming, so radical ... that it would impact the way I viewed the world”. In this regard, Jared’s change process appeared to involve “the disorienting dilemma” that frequently precipitates transformational learning (Mezirow, 1997a, p. 7). Such dilemmas cause the learners to critically self-examine their assumptions and beliefs about the world.

Both Jared and Joseph may have described their transfer process as an unconscious one as they typically did not proactively seek to apply their learning. Jared recounted “I didn’t really have the thoughts that I really need to apply this [so] I’m going to do x”. Joseph similarly recollected that he did not think “of applying per say”.

Bonnie, while describing her transfer process as unconscious, did consciously seek discussion opportunities with her colleagues about the course, upon her return to the workplace, as noted earlier. Bonnie was also aware before and after the training program stages of how she might apply the course materials to her work activities, as will be discussed later. Before registering for the course for example, Bonnie recalled thinking that the course would be useful to her in her everyday communications and upon her return to the workplace, she immediately sought to apply her learning. Bonnie, by taking these initiatives, by confirming her learning through discussions with her colleagues and seeking to put her learning into practice, demonstrated elements of SDL in her transfer process (Merriam & Caffarella, 1999; Tough, 1979). The participants’ need to discuss their new ideas and application efforts with their

colleagues, upon their return to the workplace, was associated with the importance of the work environment and will be discussed further in the Organizational Climate Characteristics section.

In summary, the desire to learn and how transfer occurred themes were interpreted through the transfer research and adult learning lenses. The transfer research confirmed most of the individuals' characteristics findings, with the exception of the learners' flexibility, note taking, risk taking and listening skills. The adult learning theories however, supported all of the findings, provided a different perspective and captured the overall individuals' characteristics more comprehensively.

Now that the importance of the individual learners' characteristics in the transfer equation have been interpreted, let's now examine the themes that cluster around the training program's design and development features. The next section interprets the four themes which cluster around the training program's features.

### **Training Program's Design and Development Features**

*The ancestor of every action is a thought. Ralph Waldo Emerson.*

This section of the chapter interprets the participants' transfer stories as they relate to the four themes which cluster around the training program's design and development features, according to the transfer research and the adult learning theory that has the most explanatory power. As will be recalled, these four themes are discourse, the application of the learning to life's situations, when transfer entered the learning experience, and learning by doing. A brief summary of the various training methods that were useful to the participants' transfer efforts however, will be provided followed by the interpretation of the themes. The section concludes with a summary of the overall discussions.

Many of the findings related to the training program's design and development features were supported by the transfer research. The transfer research, for example, confirmed the participants' transfer method accounts. The research noted that learner-centered, problem driven training and providing the trainees with examples of real world applications enhanced trainees' transfer efforts. Practice techniques, problem solving exercises, role plays, group discussions, and timely and constructive feedback were also associated with enhanced transfer (Broad & Newstrom, 1992; Fox, 1994; Garavaglia, 1993; Milheim, 1994; Parry, 1990b; Tannenbaum & Yukl, 1992).

The transfer research further emphasized organized group discussions. Such discussions allow the participants to receive feedback, explore, question, clarify and critically evaluate the ideas and skills presented during the training program (Nolan, 1994). In fact, Gist (1987) posited that the individuals' level of self efficacy was developed through social learning processes. These processes involved discussion with and receiving feedback from others, and were related to the individuals' level of self efficacy, perceptions of learning and performance motivation. Finally, the research emphasized providing the trainees with numerous and varied opportunities to practice their new behaviors, and to apply the theory when undertaking a task (Garavaglia, 1993; Tannenbaum & Yukl, 1992). The transfer research however, did not address the participants' notion of the significance of applying the course materials in the various contexts of their lives.

While the transfer research did not specifically address when transfer entered the trainees' learning experience, it did identify a number of strategies in the before, during and after training program stages that facilitated the trainees' awareness of transfer opportunities throughout the

three program stages. The following section provides a brief overview of such transfer strategies. These strategies were in keeping with the participants' training program experiences.

As will be recalled, the value of the other course participants' opinions and experiences were important to the research participants' learning and transfer efforts. The discourse helped them, during the course, in changing their perspectives and in confirming their learning. While Susan was the only participant who participated in a follow-up networking activity, the other participants believed that a follow-up session and networking opportunities with the course participants would have helped them in understanding how the course materials might have been better applied or, in identifying possible new application opportunities in their work activities. The participants further believed that having practice opportunities, upon their return to the workplace, would also have facilitated their transfer efforts. These two matters will be further elaborated on in the Organizational Climate Characteristics section.

Broad and Newstrom (1992) posited that a transfer partnership between the manager, trainer and trainee, during all three training program stages, was essential to transfer. This partnership consisted for example, of the trainees' recognition of the need to develop new knowledge, skills or attitudes, the trainers designing and delivering appropriate learning experiences, and the managers supporting the trainees throughout all three stages. Bowne's (1999) research also confirmed the importance of such a transfer partnership. Bowne found that it was important for the supervisors and trainers to work with the trainees to help them understand for example, what they were expected to learn during the course and apply in their work activities. Bowne suggested that the supervisors should also create a supportive work environment wherein the trainees' newly acquired knowledge, skills or attitudes were accepted

and applied. Providing trainees with opportunities to perform the trained tasks, upon their return to the workplace, enhanced the trainees' awareness of and facilitated their transfer efforts (Ford & Quinones, 1992; Olivero, Bane & Kopelman, 1997).

Following the training program, managers by meeting with the trainees to discuss and encourage the use of the knowledge and skills on the job, following up with the trainees on their application efforts, providing timely feedback on their performance, and coaching and mentoring the trainees on the application of the knowledge and skills were also found to create the trainees' awareness of transfer opportunities (Cheek & Campbell, 1994; Garavaglia, 1998; Keiner, 1994). Finally, managers and trainees in jointly developing a trainee training plan, wherein special projects and follow-up assignments were identified, also enhanced the trainees' awareness of transfer opportunities (Cheek & Campbell, 1994; Garavaglia, 1998).

The various training methods identified by the participants were also associated with facilitating adult learners' learning. Knowles (1980), in fact, identified training methods that would most enhance the acquisition of knowledge, skills and attitudes, and their application. Knowles for example, suggested that lectures, debates, group interviews, videos and reading materials were most conducive to developing the learners' knowledge. Role playing, games, participative case studies, skill practice exercises, and coaching were associated with developing the learners' skills, while experience-sharing discussions, group-centered discussions, role playing and case studies were associated with the acquisition of attitudes. Finally, group participation, demonstration, problem-solving discussions, role plays, case studies and games were identified as most conducive to the learners' application efforts. In teaching adults, Brookfield (1986) noted that "a diversity of methods will be required in meeting the multiplicity

of purposes that will arise” (p. 258).

Adult education training programs are typically learner centered, participatory and interactive, involve group deliberation and problem solving exercises, and the instructional materials seek to reflect the learners’ real-life experiences (Brookfield, 1986; Candy, 1991; Mezirow, 1991; 1997a). Working in groups, delivering lively lectures, providing feedback and reinforcement, role plays, teaching by demonstration, case studies, assignments, writing in journals and brainstorming sessions are all important to the adult learners’ learning experience (Kemerer, 1991; Renner, 1993).

Of the three learning theories, the transformational learning theory has the most explanatory power in explaining the training program’s findings. The following text, therefore, discusses these findings from the transformational learning perspective. A discussion of the when of the participants’ transfer experiences then follows. To provide a more fullsome understanding of the adult learning perspective, the when of the participants’ transfer experiences will be discussed from the perspective of the three adult learning theories.

Before engaging in the training program discussion, it is important to note that many of the self directed learning theory concepts are present in the transformational learning theory (Mezirow, 1991). In fact, Mezirow (1991) posited that individuals must have the skills to be or be self directed learners if transformational learning is to occur. Pilling-Cormick (1997) similarly suggested that the concepts in the two theories are interrelated “with each concept build[ing] on the other. ... Self directed learning is a foundation of transformational learning” (p. 69). As noted in the conceptual context, transformational learning is however, primarily concerned with how adults interpret their life experiences and make meaning of those

experiences. The theory thus focuses more on the individuals' cognitive processes. Processes which involve the learners' mental construction and understanding of the inner meaning of their experiences, and their ability to reflect on those experiences and undertake appropriate action (Merriam & Caffarella, 1999).

As many of the participants noted, having opportunities to discuss and share experiences with the other course participants (Bonnie, John, Janice and Susan), and having real life practice opportunities (Jared, Bonnie and Blake), enhanced their transfer of learning. In hearing about the other participants' perspectives and observing their behaviors and application efforts, and in receiving feedback on their own perspectives and application efforts, many of the participants believed that they confirmed their learning (Bonnie, Susan and John). They also believed that they changed their perspectives and consequently, took different actions (John and Janice). These activities and outcomes are in keeping with the transformational learning theory.

The discourse theme which related to interactions and discussions with others, is important to the adult learners' meaning making process. In adult learning, knowledge is regarded as being socially constructed, with the learners being active makers of the meaning of their experiences (Brookfield, 1986; Candy, 1991; Mezirow, 1997b). In fact, transformational learning refers to "the social process of constructing and appropriating a new or revised interpretation of the meaning of one's experiences as a guide to action" (Mezirow, 1994, pp. 222-223).

Effective discourse is essential to the learning process as it allows the learners to validate what and how they understand, or to arrive at a better judgement concerning their beliefs (Mezirow, 1997a). In transformational learning, learners deliberately and consciously interact

with their colleagues and mentors for example, to test their new perspectives and to raise issues related to professionalization and practice (Mezirow, 1991). Discourse enables the learners to test with and have their new perspectives challenged by their friends, peers and mentors, as well as assess their practices by critically examining alternative points of view (Mezirow, 1997a). Discourse, therefore, assists the learners in correcting distortions in their beliefs, values or attitudes and in developing new solutions and insights (Mezirow, 1990). Discourse further helps the learners in identifying assumptions which influence the way they perceive situations, act in their world and how they might change those assumptions to allow for new possibilities and new meanings (Mezirow, 1997a; 1990). Moreover, discourse assists the learners in understanding alternative perspectives that may explain their own dilemmas (Cranton, 1998; Mezirow, 1990).

The “transformational learning process involves questioning, critical reflection, and the need to engage in “rational discourse” to gain consensual validation for a new perspective” (Baumgartner, 2001, p. 20). Participation, collaboration, exploration, critical reflection, rational discourse, feedback and taking appropriate action are essential characteristics of the transformational learning theory (Baumgartner, 2001; Mezirow, 1990). Effective training takes place only when the learners are actively involved in their learning and not simply passive recipients of the knowledge (Brookfield, 1986; Candy, 1991). During the training program, educators should, therefore, assist the learners by fostering peer collaboration, providing equal opportunities for participation and facilitating feedback discussions (Mezirow, 1997a).

In examining the application of the learning to life’s experiences and the learning by doing themes, real life practice opportunities, both during and following a training program, are important to the adult learners’ transfer efforts (Brookfield, 1993; Kemerer, 1991). The

application of the learning is important as adult learners typically expect “to use or apply the knowledge and skill directly in order to achieve something” (Tough, 1979, p. 51), including performing “a task better” (Tough, 2002, p. 4). Such application opportunities, therefore, provide the learners with a means or tool for dealing with a task, situation, decision or activity in their lives. In adult learning, part of the learners’ meaning making process is to use the knowledge in a practical way (Daley, 2001).

The real life practice opportunities assist the learners in not only meeting the demands of their changing work situations and tasks, but also in their roles as workers, family members and community citizens (Minke, 2001). During a training program, the practical application of the learning and a problem centered curriculum which addresses real life or real work related situations are critical. In fact, Marsick (1988) posited that adults learn best about their job when their “own identity and growth are recognized as integral to their learning” (p. 194). Adult learners must acquire skills that serve many purposes, including the knowledge, skills or attitudes that “will [also] help them understand and change the communities in which they live”, organizationally and otherwise (Brookfield, 2002, p. 102).

Examining real life situations, germane to the learners’ work, personal and social lives are essential if the learners are to make meaning from their experiences. The central idea in transformational learning is to assist the learners in actively engaging in their learning, particularly about the concepts presented in the context of their own lives, as well as in identifying and critically examining their and the other learners’ assumptions about their lives - work and family (Mezirow, 1991; 1994; 1997b). When the learners are clear about their assumptions, they can then question those assumptions and assess their validity in the different

contexts of their lives (Cranton, 1996).

Group projects, role plays, case studies and simulations are the training methods most associated with providing application opportunities, in real life settings, in transformational learning (Mezirow, 1997a). Such training methods assist the learners in developing the necessary knowledge, skills or attitudes to meet the demands of their real life situations, rather than simply acquainting them with bodies of abstract knowledge. Training methods grounded “in real life issues and concerns” allow the learners to see their learning as meaningful and relevant to their application contexts (Brookfield, 1986, p. 251).

Finally, reflection, discourse and action are key characteristics of the transformational learning theory (Cranton, 1993; Mezirow, 1994). These three characteristics address the interaction, discussion and sharing of experiences, the application of the learning to life’s experiences and the learning by doing themes. Further, in taking action the learners typically have an empowered sense of self, and a critical understanding of how their social relations and culture have shaped their beliefs and feelings (Mezirow, 1991).

No particular learning theory explains the when of the participants’ transfer experiences. The three theories are, therefore, employed in the interpretation of these findings. From the adult education perspective, some of the training program principles which facilitate the adult learners’ awareness of application efforts include developing learning contracts. Both Brookfield (1995) and Knowles (1980) advocated the use of learning contracts and suggested that contracts should form a part of all adult learning experiences. The contracts are democratic, cooperative forms of assessment that provide the learners with a sense of control and independence in their learning and application efforts (Brookfield, 1995; Knowles, 1980). By diagnosing their learning needs,

and setting their objectives and target dates for completing those objectives, the learning contracts assist the learners and their managers in planning their application efforts and in evaluating their learning outcomes. Learning contracts in many respects, help the learners to structure their own learning. The learners are consequently, more likely to better understand and have a greater sense of personal commitment to the application of their learning (Knowles, 1980). A transfer partnership, similar to that described in the transfer research, was also identified in the adult learning literature as important to the adult learners' awareness of application opportunities (Caffarella, 1994; Taylor, 2000).

During the training program, facilitating and allocating sufficient time for discussions, and the practical application of what was learned, facilitate learning and transfer. A problem centered curriculum and exposure to a variety of instructional techniques or training methods such as case studies or role playing, also enhance the learners' transfer awareness (Brookfield, 1993; Caffarella, 1994; Knowles, 1989; Lave, 1997). Designing the program around a strong work related component or real world challenges (Lemke, 1997; MacDonald, Gabriel & Cousins, 2000; Merriam & Caffarella, 1999), and discussing and providing feedback to the participants on the application of the information are also useful strategies (York, O-Neil, Marsick, Lamm, Kolodny & Nilson, 1998; Taylor, 2000). As Ottoson (1995a) posited, to enhance transfer the ideas in the training program must be put "in context with the practical" (p. 27), with the learners' "knowledge about context ... brought directly to bear on the ideas intended for application" (1995b, p. 15). Ottoson further suggested that "continuing education programs may need to devote as much time to prepare participants for application as in helping them understand the innovation itself" (Ottoson, 1997, p. 106).

Many of the participants recollected thinking, during the training program, about the instructor and the course content, rather than about possible application opportunities. This finding speaks to the importance of providing the learners with discussion and practice opportunities, during the training, that reflect their real life application contexts, thereby assisting them in making the linkages between the course content, and its relevance to and application in the various contexts of their lives (e.g., Broad & Newstrom, 1992; Kirschner & Whitson, 1997; Mezirow, 1994; Milheim, 1994).

Following the training program, management, line managers and employees, by creating a respectful, supportive, collaborative and trusting learning climate, also enhance the learners' awareness of their transfer efforts (Caffarella, 1994; Knowles, 1984). Finally, leaders and supervisors by mentoring, coaching and providing feedback, as well as providing agreed upon opportunities for the trainees to perform the trained tasks in the workplace further enhance that awareness (Hansman, 2001; Ottoson, 1994; Wilson, 1993). Providing follow-up or refresher sessions, as suggested by some of the participants, are also beneficial (Taylor, 2000).

Now that the findings related to the individuals' characteristics and the training program's design and development features have been interpreted, our attention turns to the final two themes. The next section of this chapter addresses the organizational climate characteristics themes.

### **Organizational Climate Characteristics**

*If you do what you've always done, you'll get what you've always gotten. Anonymous (Robbins, 1986, p. 331).*

The participants described a facilitative work environment as an open, positive, trusting

and supportive culture. They described the major challenges to their transfer efforts as time, evolving oneself as a learner and the work environment. The next section interprets these findings according to the transfer research and the adult learning theory that has the most explanatory power. An overall summary of the discussions follows.

In examining the organizational climate characteristics cluster of themes, many of the participants' views were supported by the transfer research findings. As will be recalled in Chapter two, the organizational climate characteristics were categorized as the organizational transfer climate, managerial support and trainees' opportunities to perform the trained tasks upon their return to the workplace. The Organizational Climate Characteristics findings will be examined in accordance with these three categories in the following text.

Before examining the transfer research, it will be recalled that a number of issues were raised in the individuals' characteristics and training program discussions that were also relevant to the organizational climate. These issues pertained to the individuals' characteristics - the how of the participants' transfer process in terms of their need to discuss their ideas and application efforts with their colleagues for example, and their motivations and learning goals being premised on their work demands. The training program, in turn, related to follow-up with the other course participants and having application opportunities, following the training program. The organizational climate further addresses these matters.

The transfer research found that trainees who perceived their transfer climate as a continuous learning culture which was supportive of their transfer efforts, had increased transfer levels. Such support included the managers positively reinforcing the employees' new behaviors, clearly outlining the training expectations with the trainee and creating a culture of continuous

innovation (Richman, 1998; Smith-Jenstch, Salas & Brannick, 2001; Tracey, Tannenbaum & Kavanagh, 1995). “Behaviors that send a message that learning is important and valued, and cues that suggest the organization is innovative and competitive, appear to encourage the application of newly trained behaviors” (Tracey, et al., p. 248). Organizations which provided situational cues which reminded the trainees of their training such as their managers’ reinforcement of their new behaviors, having opportunities to use their training, and supervisors’ and peers’ support facilitated employees’ application efforts, all of which were in keeping with the participants’ experiences (Cheek & Campbell, 1994; Rouiller & Goldstein, 1993).

Holton, Bates, Seylor and Carvalho (1997), also in keeping with many of the participants’ experiences, identified the following transfer climate constructs as facilitating employees’ transfer: (a) supervisor support, (b) opportunities to use the training, (c) peer support and (d) positive personal outcomes. Supervisory sanctions such as negative feedback, negative personal outcomes such as reprimands, and resistance such as ridicule from colleagues inhibited the employees’ transfer efforts.

The transfer research also found that trainees whose supervisors engaged in discussions with them prior to the training concerning the linkages between the training and the job, or who had follow-up discussions concerning what the course was about or how the training material might be applied, showed enhanced transfer levels. Executive coaching and mentoring were also identified as important means of ensuring that the knowledge acquired during the training program was actually applied in the trainees’ work activities (Brinkerhoff & Montessano, 1995; Olivero, Bane & Kopelman, 1997). The coaching activity involved the managers planning application experiences, and providing the trainees with guidance and encouragement. The

mentoring activity, on the other hand, acted to communicate, motivate, instruct and provide effective feedback to the trainees regarding their careers (Cheek & Campbell, 1994).

The transfer research found that managerial support included assisting trainees in their transfer efforts by co-developing learning contracts or Personal Learning Plans (PLP) with the trainees. The trainees, in turn, needed to identify and discuss their anticipated training objectives with their managers prior to attending the training program, and discuss their progress towards achieving those objectives following the training program (Garavaglia, 1998; Milheim, 1994).

Olivero, et al.'s research found that a critical transfer factor in the trainees' transfer efforts was their opportunity to practice or perform their newly learned skills, upon their return to the workplace. Ford and Quinones (1992), Holton, Bates, Seylor and Carvalho (1997), and Rouiller and Goldstein (1993) reported similar findings. Finally, the transfer research noted that employees' negative perceptions of their work environment, their fear of ridicule, their inability to practice the skills or use the knowledge acquired in the training, their supervisors' and colleagues' lack of support and negative feedback, and insufficient time to meet the work deadlines, all acted to inhibit the employees' transfer efforts (Broad & Newstrom, 1992; Holton, Bates, Seylor & Carvalho, 1997; Noe, 1986; Rouiller & Goldstein, 1993). Meers' (1997) research confirmed these findings and further identified unmet employee expectations and lack of participation in decision making processes as further inhibitive of employees' transfer efforts.

In examining the two work environment or organizational climate characteristic themes through the adult education lens, the situated cognition theory has the most explanatory power. The following text addresses the findings from the situated cognition theory perspective.

In adult learning, as previously mentioned, learning is a social activity that occurs in the

context of a social grouping. The context, or the social norms, history, values and beliefs, all influence the way employees define a situation or problem, the way they select the appropriate options for action, the way they interact with other employees and finally, the learning that is affected (Brookfield, 1995; Hansman, 2001; Watkins & Marsick, 1993). Discourse or the “sociohistorical coordinations of people, objects (props), ways of talking, acting, situating, thinking, valuing, and (sometimes) writing and reading that allow for the display and recognition of socially significant identities”, are extremely important to the adults’ learning and transfer efforts (Gee, 1997, p. 256).

In situated cognition, the organizational transfer climate, the managers’ support and the trainees’ opportunities to perform the trained tasks, are subsumed in the social nature of learning or, the community of practice. In fact, in situated cognition, the transfer climate, managerial support and practice opportunities are not separate entities but are rather, integral to and integrated into the practices of the community.

The “core idea in situated cognition is that learning is inherently social in nature” (Hansman, 2001, p. 45). Learning involves the interaction of the learners and the social environment in which they function. The culture or the community of practice and its viewpoint, are key to the employees’ learning and application efforts (Brown, Collins & Duguid, 1989; Goodkind, 1997). In situated cognition, “adults no longer learn from experiences, they learn in it, as they act in situations and are acted upon by situations” (Wilson, 1993, p. 75). In many respects, the employees’ learning and transfer activities are framed by the culture.

By having the opportunity to observe and practice the behaviors of the other community members, employees pick up the relevant jargon, imitate the acceptable behaviors, and gradually

start to act in accordance with the cultural norms. In situated cognition, learners do not acquire knowledge but rather learn through modeling, coaching and practice approaches as they seek to resolve ill-defined problems that “arise out of authentic activity” or the ordinary practice of the culture (Wilson, 1993, p. 78).

Modeling, mentoring, coaching, internships and apprenticeships are important learning activities that provide the learners with real-world, context based learning (Hansman, 2001). In fact, such activities highlight the “inherently context dependent, situated, and enculturating nature of learning” (Brown, Collins & Duguid, 1989, p. 39). These activities assist the learners in developing the required skills and competencies, within their particular context of practice (Garrick, 1998; Hansman, 2001; Merriam & Caffarella, 1999). These activities act to reinforce the learners’ learning efforts. Authentic activity is essential as it is the only way in which the learners “gain access to the standpoint that enables practitioners to act meaningfully and purposefully” (Brown, et al., p. 36).

In adult learning, education takes “place in a particular social location, with a social vision and systems of social, economic and cultural relationships of power” (Cervero & Wilson, 1999, p. 34). The organizational culture in many respects, forms the individuals and shapes their characters by enabling or constraining their possible courses of action (Welton, 1995). The culture, therefore, acts to either facilitate or inhibit employees’ learning and transfer efforts.

In more closely examining the participants’ accounts of the organizational climate characteristics, many of the activities that they made reference to, such as mentoring and coaching, related to informal learning practices. Practices, while important to all three learning theories, are of particular relevance to the situated cognition theory. In informal learning

practices, the workplace or the “authentic” setting provides the basis for the employees’ learning experiences. Employees, therefore, learn within a purposeful cultural and social context (Garrick, 1996; 1998). The “social engagement with others – is an integral part of any actual knowledge acquisition process” in informal learning (Livingstone, 1999, p. 53). In fact, Kemerer (1991) suggested that training and educational activities should form part of the natural environment through informal practices, the “natural network of learning” (p. 78).

Informal learning practices also include incidental learning whereby the participants learn through involvement with and observing the actions of others (Garrison, 1998; Marsick & Watkins, 1992; 2001; Merriam & Caffarella, 1999). The participants, in addressing informal practices, noted the importance for example, of networking with their managers and colleagues, planning performance activities, and receiving coaching from their managers and colleagues, and mentoring from their mentors. The participants also noted the importance of receiving support, encouragement, assistance and feedback from their managers and peers concerning their learning and application efforts.

In many respects, the informal learning aspect, while not explicitly stated as informal learning practices in the transfer research, was identified as facilitating the trainees’ transfer of learning. It can, therefore, be argued that informal learning practices were present and subsumed in the transfer research findings. In the before training program stage for example, informal practices included trainees, in conjunction with their managers, identifying learning goals and objectives in their learning contracts, and managers and trainers helping the trainees to understand what they needed to learn during the training and apply in their work activities (Broad & Newstrom, 1992; Fox, 1994; Bowne, 1999). In the during program stage, group discussions

were emphasized wherein the trainees could question, explore and receive feedback from the instructor and the other participants, an activity which may not necessarily be formally structured (Nolan, 1994). Finally, in the after program stage, mentoring, coaching, collaboration among peers and practice opportunities, all informal practices, were regarded as facilitative of the participants' transfer efforts (Ford & Quinones, 1992; Olivero, Bane & Kopelman, 1997). It would appear that transfer requires elements of both formal and informal learning.

In critically examining the situated cognition theory, while it addressed many of the participants' accounts of a facilitative organizational context, there was a sense that employees' learning takes place primarily through the existing work practices and cultural norms. Such practices and norms may however, not necessarily be desirable or conducive to the employees' highest level of performance (Fenwick, 2000). Further, there is a sense of a power structure within the community of practice. The mentors and coaches for example, are positioned as possessing the necessary knowledge and skills which they model or share with employees (Fenwick, 2000). The situated cognition theory, while acknowledging the importance of the learners generating their solutions to problems, may be remiss at addressing the two above noted and potentially, problematic areas (Brown, Collins & Duguid, 1989). Further, learner characteristics such as cocreation, critical reflection and proactivity on the part of the learner are important conditions which facilitate informal and incidental learning. Marsick and Watkins (2001) noted that the following three conditions facilitated employees' informal and incidental learning. These conditions were: (1) critical reflection to surface tacit knowledge and beliefs, (2) stimulation of proactivity on the part of the learner to actively identify options and to learn new skills to implement those options or solutions, and (3) creativity to encourage a wider range of

options (Marsick & Watkins, 2001). The situated cognition theory did not emphasize such learner characteristics.

The innovative and learning organization principles however, better address all of the participants' workplace learning context experiences. Innovative organizations for example, have been characterized, similar to the participants' descriptions of a positive, open and trusting culture, as having a people-centered, caring, warm, informal, respectful and trusting atmosphere. These organizations also have a philosophy that the employees' creative energies should be released and that power should be used supportively. Innovative organizations, similar to the participants' description of a facilitative culture, learn from their mistakes, take risks, develop their human resources potential and possess a tolerance for ambiguity, key ingredients in ensuring the employees' application efforts. Participation in and collaboration by all managers and staff in the decision making and planning processes are also critical, as is the open flow of and easy access to communications, similar to the participants' descriptions of their managers' and colleagues' support (Knowles, 1980).

In a learning organization, on the other hand, learning is similarly built into the planning of the work and the employees' career paths. Employees and managers also develop the habit of learning, asking questions, providing feedback and sharing their learning with others. Further, employees are rewarded for their learning and empowered to make decisions that affect their jobs. Dialogue is a key strategy in the employees' learning efforts. Their learning efforts are also supported by a culture that is open to risk taking, experimentation, collaboration, and providing practice opportunities within their community of practice. Marsick & Watkins (1994) suggested that "as individuals become part of the community of practice, they also transform it. ...

Cocreation is central to the idea of the learning organization” (p. 355). Personal Learning Plans or learning contracts are also employed as a means of facilitating employees’ learning and transfer efforts (Brookfield, 1995; Knowles, 1980).

Marsick and Watkins (1994) posited that the challenge of a learning organization is to build a culture that supports people in using their new knowledge to make a difference. They also suggested that learning organizations must create practice fields in which individuals learn experientially the new skills that will ultimately, become their performance repertoire. Marsick and Watkins (1992) suggested, in keeping with some of the research participants’ responses, that one of the major impediments to a learning organization is its bureaucracy. They noted that bureaucratic organizations are “not structured to support employee empowerment and the decentralization of learning” (p. 12). In fact, Marsick and Watkins (1996) identified eight barriers in creating a learning organization, all of which were identified by the participants in their transfer efforts. These barriers were: (1) an inability to recognize and change existing mental models, (2) learned helplessness wherein proactive, curious, self-directed learners are stifled, (3) tunnel vision, (4) truncated learning where mistakes are not regarded as opportunities to learn, (5) individualism, rather than collaboration, (6) a culture of disrespect and fear, (7) an entrenched bureaucracy, and (8) the struggle between managing and capitalizing on diversity.

Further, organizations which do not have a habit of learning, asking questions, providing feedback, sharing employees’ learning experiences and providing continuous learning opportunities, inhibit employees’ transfer. A culture that is not open to experimentation, collaboration or risk taking, and does not empower employees nor provide practice opportunities to develop their new behaviors, further inhibits transfer. Finally, leaders who do not model and

support learning at the individual, team and organizational levels inhibit employees' application efforts (Marsick & Watkins, 1994; Watkins and Marsick, 1993). The participants recounted all of these factors in their discussions of a facilitative culture and the major challenges that they faced in their transfer efforts.

In keeping with the participants' transfer accounts, time was addressed in the adult literature in terms of there being insufficient time: a) for the learners to incorporate what they learned into their work activities, b) for the learners' supervisors, peers or managers to support their transfer efforts, and c) for the learners to be away from the office to participate in longer courses. Time was also addressed during the training program as insufficient time being allocated to the application of the course materials, and following the training, as the organizational climate not supporting the employees' continuous learning and development efforts (Caffarella, 1994; Ottoson, 1994; Taylor, 2000). Receiving feedback and reinforcement from the employees' supervisors and peers, upon their return to the workplace, were also identified as challenges, due to the time required to undertake them (Kemerer, 1991).

In adult learning, the ultimate responsibility for making meaning of life's experiences is placed on the learner, similar to the participants' accounts of the challenge of evolving themselves as learners. Only with a great deal of personal effort and assistance from others do individuals become aware of how and what they think, and take appropriate action (Brookfield, 2002; Candy, 1991). The learners must accept responsibility for identifying their learning needs, cognitively monitoring their learning process, assessing their learning outcomes and developing strategies to achieve their intended outcomes (Caffarella, 1993; Garrison, 1992; 1997). In fact, Garrison (1992) suggested that it is the learners' "responsibility to integrate their new

perspectives, knowledge or skills, to construct meaning, and to share and justify that meaning through discussions with others” (p. 139).

Thus far this chapter has interpreted the participants’ lived accounts of transfer as they related to the three primary transfer sources. The next section of this chapter interprets the participants’ views concerning the possible interplay between the individuals’ characteristics, the training program’s design and development features, and organizational climate characteristics.

### **Are there Interrelationships between the Individuals’ Characteristics, Training Program’s Design and Development Features, and Organizational Climate Characteristics?**

*The most beautiful thing we can experience is the mystery. Albert Einstein.*

The interrelationships between the individuals’ characteristics, training program’s features and organizational climate were not easy for the participants to describe and their responses were quite varied. The participants characterized the interrelationship as the blending of professional and personal needs, targeted training and employees’ openness and attitudes towards learning. The participants’ responses, in both the interview and focus group, appeared to be premised on their unique perspectives on the subject, experiences in transferring their learning and their assumptions about the three transfer sources.

From a wide angle lens, there does not appear to be a distinct boundary between the three transfer sources. Rather, there appears to be an ebb and flow between them, with one source intricately dependent on the other two. For example, the individuals’ characteristics included the participants’ motivations, desire to proactively look for application opportunities, self discipline and need to evolve themselves as learners. It also included their ability to actively engage in discourse, apply their learning to the various contexts of their lives, engage in “real life” practice opportunities and their perceptions of an open and supportive culture. Matters which, while

germane to the learner, also addressed aspects of the training program and organizational climate. In fact, aspects of two of the training program themes depended on the organizational climate for application to transpire. These aspects were the importance of the learners' having application opportunities and follow-up activities with the other course participants, following the participants' return to the workplace. The how of the participants' transfer process also related to both the training program and organizational climate - the importance of discourse and having opportunities to apply their learning, both during and following the learning activity, respectively. Finally, the participants' motivations related to the training program and organizational climate - the need to have their specific learning goals addressed during the course, and the demands of the different contexts of their lives being the basic premise of their motivations, respectively. Figure 3 provides a graphical depiction of the interrelationships between the three transfer sources and the adult learning theories.

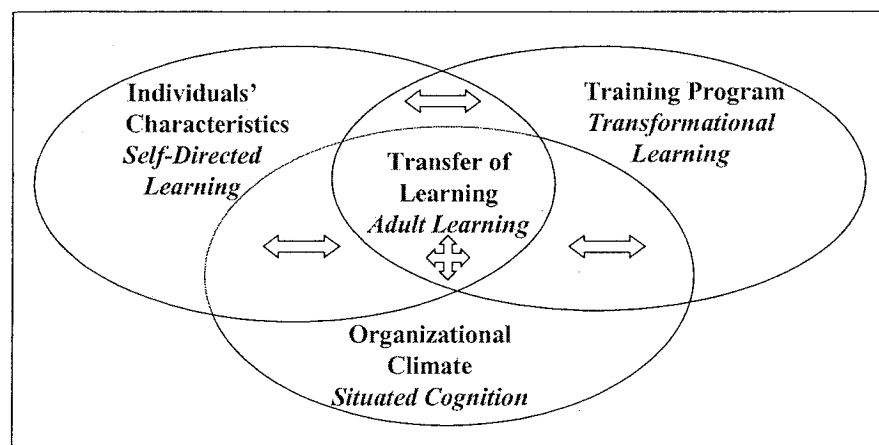


Figure 3: The transfer of learning and adult learning - The interrelationships.

The training program, in turn, appeared to depend on the individuals' characteristics such as their motivations, course expectations, training method preferences and desire to apply their learning. It further rested on the learners' need to address real life situations, interact with others,

and have practice opportunities, both during and following the training. All of these variables addressed the three primary transfer sources. Finally, the organizational climate also depended on the learners' motivations, motivations which were generally premised on the demands of their work, their desire to apply and have practice opportunities, as well as their perceptions of an open and supportive culture. The organizational climate further rested on the importance of the training program namely, the learners having opportunities to learn by doing, engaging in discourse and having their managers' support, for example. The participants' transfer experiences, therefore, appeared to be dependent on an intricate interplay between the individual, training program and organizational climate. This finding may, in fact, be providing further evidence to Merriam's (2001) position that an adult learning theory must account for the learner, the learning process, and the context, or the individuals' characteristics, training program and organizational climate, respectively.

From the perspective of a telescopic lens, the interplay appears to be quite complex, dependent on a delicate and intricate interweaving of the three transfer sources and the numerous variables within those sources. As will be recalled, all of the participants, with the exception of Joseph, transferred their learning. As will also be recalled, the variables that facilitated the participants' transfer efforts included their motivations and course expectations, their preferred training program methods, the length of the course, and whether they had a supportive manager and mentor, for example.

In examining the variables that facilitated the participants' transfer efforts, John for example, believed that he transferred his learning to both his professional and personal lives. He was depicted as consciously seeking to apply his learning, primarily a transformational learner

and aware of transfer opportunities both during and following the training program, all factors that were associated with positive transfer. John however, noted that his course expectations were met only to an extent, he received support from his manager in the before training program stage only, and he did not perceive his work environment as supportive of his learning and transfer efforts. All of these latter factors were not associated with positive transfer. Joseph, on the other hand, who did not transfer his learning was self initiated in identifying the course and in seeking his manager's approval for the course, believed his course expectations were met and regarded his work environment as supportive, all positive transfer factors. Joseph however, did not seek to apply his learning, was cast primarily as an informational learner and did not have a mentor or a PLP, all factors that were not associated with positive transfer.

No one transfer variable nor single cluster of themes is more conducive to or accounts for all of the participants' transfer of learning. In fact, what was important to one participant's transfer was seemingly not as important to another in his/her transfer efforts. All three clusters of themes appear to be equally important to the participants' transfer of learning. Further, the interweaving of the numerous variables, within each cluster of themes, appears to impact the learners' application efforts. The individuals' characteristics for example, influenced if learning would take place, what learning would transpire and whether the learning would be applied. The training program's features, in turn, influenced what application and real life situations would be addressed, the degree of dialogue that would be permitted, and whether the learners' learning goals and preferred training methods for example, would be taken into account. Finally, the organizational climate characteristics influenced the participants' motivations and course expectations, the real life training program situations that would be addressed during the learning

activity, and the application of the learners' learning in their work activities.

It was from the telescopic lens perspective that transfer appeared to be a complex "web of influences whose interaction shape[d] application" (Ottoson, 1995b, p. 13). In many respects, this research provides further evidence to Ottoson's "web of influences" statement as no one particular cluster of themes, nor particular variables within and between those clusters accounted for the participants' transfer efforts. Rather, different variables appeared to be more conducive to the individual participant's transfer of learning. Variables that may rest on the different issues that the learners face within themselves, when learning in a training program, and when addressing the specific demands and conditions of their organizational climate

In final analysis, from the wide angle lens perspective, transfer appeared to be based on an intricate interplay between the individuals' characteristics, the content to be learned, the interactions among the learners or the social process of learning and learning by doing, for example, and the context of the demands of the learners' life (Caffarella, 1993; Ottoson, 1995b; Taylor & Blunt, 2001). From the telescopic lens perspective, the interplay between the three clusters of themes appeared to be even more complex. The interplay appeared to depend on an intricate interplay between the varied individuals' characteristics, training program and organizational climate variables. It also appeared to involve a proactive, complex, intricate and personal journey, dependent on the interplay between the three transfer sources and the respective variables within those sources.

In examining the possible interrelationships from the perspective of the three adult learning theories, the learners' motivations, interests, attitudes and expectations are all framed by the context of the learners' lives. The learners' motivations, interests, attitudes and expectations

are further shaped and modified through interactions with others, in the context of their social groupings (Candy, 1991; Chovenac, 1998; Knowles, 1980). In adult learning, the learner, process and context are all essential (Caffarella, 1993; Merriam & Caffarella, 1999). In fact, adult learners typically approach their learning based on their motivations, their understanding of the subject matter and their interpretation of the demands of the learning situation (Candy, 1991). Adult learners, by considering their context, learn a particular content for a particular reason. The training program or the learning process, which includes interaction with other learners and having real life practice opportunities is, in turn, necessary as “most learning requires the acquisition of a way of thinking about a subject” (Candy, 1991, p. 283). Interaction and practice opportunities, in turn, require a supportive, caring, respectful, trusting and open learning environment, in both the training program and organizational climate (Brookfield, 1995; Cranton, 1998).

Knowledge about the context, in turn, shapes the adults’ learning and application efforts as the activities of a “domain are framed by its culture” (Brown, Collins & Duguid, 1989, p. 34). The context plays a key role in influencing the manner in which the learners interpret the situation, the choices they make, the actions they take and the learning that is effected (Brookfield, 1995; Hansman, 2001; Marsick & Watkins, 2001; Mezirow, 1996). The learners’ knowledge about the context affects their learning and application efforts, as the meaning making process requires both “cognitive and situational depictions of the constructed learning” (Daley, 2001, p. 52). Learners must acquire the necessary knowledge, skills or attitudes, and understand the demands of their workplace context and how they will apply their learning within that context.

Finally, in adult learning the learner is viewed from a wholistic perspective, regarded as more than a “cognitive machine”. The learner has a mind, memories, emotions, and conscious and subconscious worlds. The learning process, in turn, is more than the “systematic acquisition and storage of information”. The process includes the learner absorbing, imagining, intuiting, learning informally with others, making sense of their lives, and transforming what and how they learn. The context, on the other hand, “situates the learner in a particular context”, wherein the training program, the organizational context and the learners’ general life experiences, affect their learning and application efforts (Merriam, 2001, p. 96).

In summary, this chapter interpreted the participants’ lived accounts of transfer as they related to the three primary transfer sources. The lenses of both the transfer research and adult learning theories were used to give the participants’ transfer experiences further meaning and context. The interplay between the three primary transfer sources however, was interpreted through the adult learning lens only as every effort was brought to bear on understanding the possible interrelationships between the learner, learning process and context, or the adult learning theories’ equivalent to the three primary transfer sources.

Chapter six provides a summary and discussion of the findings of this research. It also discusses the research’s contribution to scholarly knowledge in workplace learning, and in educational policies and practices; the areas requiring further study; and the limitations of the research. Finally, Chapter six provides some concluding remarks.

## **CHAPTER SIX**

### **Summary and Discussion**

This research sought to gain an understanding of employees' perceptions of and experiences with the transfer of learning. It also sought to gain an understanding of the interaction between the three primary transfer sources, as well as of whether the adult learning theories were well positioned to bring a different perspective to the transfer subject. Seven federal government administrative, professional and managerial employees participated in the research. The overarching research question which guided this study was what were the employees' lived experiences with the transfer of learning? This question is addressed in all three primary transfer source sections of this chapter. The second question addressed how the participants transferred their learning. This subquestion is addressed in the individuals' characteristics and the possible interrelationships between the primary transfer sources sections. The third subquestion sought to understand when transfer entered the participants' learning experience and is discussed in the training program's design and development section. Finally, the fourth subquestion, the why of the participants' transfer experiences, is addressed in a separate section as it was not one of the eight themes. Table 5 depicts the research questions by the primary transfer source and theme.

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a summary of the findings, followed by a discussion of the research's contribution to scholarly knowledge, the implications of the findings for organizations, employees, and educational practices, the areas requiring further study, the limitations of the research and some concluding remarks. The summary of the findings will begin with a discussion of the why of the participants' transfer accounts, to establish that transfer occurred for the majority of the participants and their transfer efforts required the adaptation of

their learning. The summary then addresses the eight main themes which emerged from the data analysis, the importance of formal and informal learning, and the possible interrelationships between the three primary transfer sources.

**Table 5**  
**Addressing The Research Questions**

<b>Research Question</b>	<b>Section/s of the Chapter that Address the Research Question</b>	<b>The Emergent Theme</b>
<b>What were the employees' lived experiences?</b>	Individuals' Characteristics	1. Desire to learn
	Training Program's Design and Development Features	2. Discourse 3. Application of learning to everyday life situations 4. Learning by doing
	Organizational Climate Characteristics	5. An open and supportive culture 6. Major challenges to transfer
<b>How did the employees' experience transfer?</b>	Individuals' Characteristics The Possible Interrelationships between the Transfer Sources	7. How transfer occurred
<b>When did transfer enter their learning experience?</b>	Training Program's Design and Development Features	8. The when of the participants' transfer experiences
<b>Why did they believe that transfer had occurred?</b>	The why of the participants' transfer accounts	1. Desire to learn

#### **The Why of the Participants' Transfer Accounts**

*Great thoughts speak only to the thoughtful mind, but great actions speak to all mankind.*

*Emile P. Bissell.*

All of the participants, with the exception of Joseph, cited examples of changes in their behaviors. These examples provided evidence of the participants' transfer of their learning, in

many cases of knowledge, skills and attitudes, to their work activities. The cited examples were in keeping with the first part of the transfer definition employed in this study namely, the knowledge, skills or attitudes that an individual gains from a training program that are effectively applied in their workplace efforts. The majority of the participants also cited examples of transfer to the different contexts of their lives - professional, family and community. These examples provided an indication of the participants' competency at adapting their learning to those varied contexts. As mentioned, Joseph was the only participant who was unable to cite an example of an explicit change in either his professional practice or personal life. While Joseph recalled learning how to write and communicate for a purpose, he could not or was reluctant to say whether he had consciously applied that information in his work activities.

While the majority of the participants believed that their transfer efforts resulted in their enhanced job performance, the second part of the transfer definition, they were not unanimous as to the degree of those enhancements. The participants' responses ranged from minimally enhanced (John), to difficult to say (Blake and Joseph), to made a positive contribution (Bonnie and Jared), to absolutely enhanced (Susan and Janice).

The degree of enhanced performance appeared to rest on a number of factors. One such factor was the participants' ability to clearly demarcate what they learned in the course and applied in their work activities, from their general life experiences and interest in learning. Another factor was the belief that the course, by not providing sufficient practice opportunities, limited the degree of their enhanced job performance. A third factor was the type of courses examined in this research. The Communications course for example, may have had similar course content to courses that the participants had taken in the past or, due to their general

interest in learning or their life experiences, were somewhat familiar with. As a consequence, some of the participants may have been unable to attribute their learning and transfer efforts solely to the courses in question thereby, affecting their responses to the enhanced job performance aspect of the transfer definition. A fourth factor was the participants' position as a manager (Janice, Susan and Jared). Managers are typically empowered to make decisions, including changing their job behaviors through their transfer of learning efforts.

Finally, the length of the courses may have been another contributing factor. The participants who participated in the 10 day course for example, were "absolutely" sure that the course had enhanced their job performance. This longer course may have provided the participants with sufficient opportunities to practice and discuss the materials, critical factors in the participants' transfer efforts, thus providing those participants with a greater level of comfort when transferring their learning to their work activities.

Interestingly, all of the participants cited different aspects of the courses in their accounts of why they believed that transfer had occurred in their work efforts. Aspects which appeared to be premised on their desire to meet the specific demands of their work activities. For example, Janice, one of the participants in the Leadership training program, recollected that she had learned and applied specific knowledge related to her strategic planning efforts, had enhanced her people skills and changed her perceptions regarding her staff. Susan, the second participant, focused on her conflict resolution skills, her leadership knowledge and her perfectionism's effect on her staff. This finding was in keeping with the notion that adults learn knowledge, skills or attitudes in response to the specific demands of their current life situations (Knowles, 1980; Tough, 2002).

While the participants cited different aspects of the courses in their application efforts, the communications and interpersonal-relationship skills were identified most frequently as transfer examples, both in their work and personal lives. While all of the courses in question had a communications element, communications was not the focus of two of the courses. This finding may be providing some evidence that these skills are indeed essential competencies for the workplace, indicative of the fact that soft skills, such as communications and problem solving, are basic to workplace learning, important to the “cultural politics of working life” (Jackson & Jordan, 2001, p. 200).

On the basis of the study’s findings, the transfer of learning definition employed in this research was revised. The definition needed to account for the notions of previous training experience or prior learned knowledge and skills, the importance of applying one’s learning in the different contexts of one’s life, and learning activities rather than strictly a training program. A more comprehensive transfer definition may be as follows: prior learned or new knowledge, skills or attitudes that an individual gains from learning activities that are effectively applied in the performance of their work, personal and community responsibilities.

Finally, in examining the participants’ transfer accounts in terms of the transfer indicators, as outlined by Baldwin and Ford (1988) and Ford and Weissbein (1997), the participants appeared to have generalized and adapted the training program content, and to have maintained their learned behaviors over a period of time. Due to the type of courses examined in this research and transfer being described as “subtle” where the linkages between the course content and the participants’ work activities were not always clear, the participants were required to modify the course content to meet their “novel work situations” or to have experienced far

transfer (Laker, 1990, p. 211). High road transfer, which requires “trainees to be mindful of their learning and to abstract the knowledge, skills or attitudes from one context to application in a new context” also likely occurred, particularly in light of the participants’ transfer efforts in the different contexts of their lives (Perkins and Salomon, 1988, p. 26). Finally, in view of the fact that the interviews were conducted three to six months following the courses, the participants appeared to have maintained their changed behaviors over a period of time that was in keeping with the commonly held practice of “three months or more” (Kirkpatrick, 1987, p. 313).

Having established that transfer occurred for the majority of the participants and that their transfer efforts required the adaptation of their learning, the next section of this chapter summarizes the desire to learn and how transfer occurred themes. These two themes, related to the individuals’ characteristics, addressed the what and how research questions.

### **Individuals’ Characteristics**

*We must be the change we wish to see in the world. Gandhi.*

The desire to learn and how transfer occurred themes addressed characteristics of learners who succeeded in their transfer efforts. The first theme addressed the overarching research question - what were the employees’ lived experiences with the transfer of learning while the second theme addressed the subquestion - how did the employees experience transfer? The following section briefly summarizes these two themes.

The desire to learn theme related to the what of the participants’ motivations, course expectations, attitudes and skills. The participants’ motivations or what inspired them to participate in the courses were varied, multifaceted and differed among the participants who participated in the same courses. Some of the participants for example, were initially motivated

by their managers' suggestion to participate in the course, other participants by the course's positive reputation and yet others by their desire to respond to a negative work experience or make a career decision. Generally speaking however, the participants' motivations related to improving their job performance, developing their knowledge and skills, or changing their attitudes. Even though a number of the participants were initially motivated to participate by their managers' suggestion, all of the participants had identified their own learning goals and motivations for participating.

In terms of the multifacetedness of the participants' motivations and the differences among those who participated in the same courses, while three of the participants participated in the Communications course, all generally seeking to improve their communications, they all had specific and different motivations. John for example, sought to receive and deliver the message better and to change some of his perceptions, Bonnie to deal more effectively with difficult people due to a previous negative work experience, and Joseph to simply improve his communications.

Janice and Susan similarly sought different things from their course. Janice's motivations rested primarily on the course helping her to make a career decision, as well as further developing her self knowledge and knowledge of how the government operated. For Susan, it was an opportunity to enhance her leadership knowledge and skills, and network with other managers. Jared and Blake, on the other hand, both sought to deal more effectively with employee performance problems. Jared however, was primarily motivated by the course's reputation and sought to use the course as "a refresher as much as anything else". Blake, on the other hand, sought to enhance his communications skills. All seven participants believed that

their course expectations had been met.

The attitudes and skills identified by the participants as necessary to their transfer efforts were also quite varied. They were generally characterized as the learners' open mindedness, positive attitude, ability to reflect, interest in and choice of the training program, and having course expectations. They were also characterized as the learners' possessing flexibility, listening, note taking and risk taking skills. The attitudes and skills further included the learners proactively looking for application opportunities and possessing self discipline. The learners' proactivity was characterized as the learners possessing an attitude of can do, and questioning and making the linkages between what was taught during the course and its application in their work activities. The learners' self discipline was characterized as the learners possessing the discipline to review their course materials, change their behaviors and continue on with their learning efforts.

The transfer research, under the individuals' characteristics transfer source, confirmed the desire to learn theme findings and captured some of the participants' specific motivations in greater detail than the self directed learning theory. The transfer research for example, identified a negative work experience (Smith-Jentsch, Jentsch, Payne & Salas, 1996) and the course's reputation (Facteau, Dobbins, Russell, Ladd & Kudisch, 1995) as key motivational factors. The SDL theory, on the other hand, provided a different perspective on the subject. This theory captured the participants' motivations under the general umbrella of the adult learners' intent to learn, to respond to their current life situations (Knowles, 1980; Tough, 2002; 1979). The SDL theory, in addressing specific learner characteristics such as the learners' intrinsic motivation, reflection, desire to cope more effectively with life situations, ability to self manage their

learning activities, and need to confirm their learning through social activities, provided a more wholistic view of individuals who transfer their learning. In final analysis, the SDL theory explained more comprehensively, the participants' desire to learn theme accounts.

The transfer research and SDL theory were very similar in their treatment of the learners' course expectations. Both of these literatures, in keeping with this study's findings, noted that the fulfillment of the learners' course expectations rested on the course sufficiently addressing their specific motivations for participating. The literatures also noted that the fulfillment of the learners' expectations rested on the changes that they were able to effect in their work activities, as a result of their application efforts (Tannenbaum, Mathieu, Salas & Cannon Bowers, 1991; Hammond & Collins, 1991).

Finally, the transfer research, with the exception of the participants' notions of flexibility, listening, note taking and risk taking skills, confirmed the various attitudes and skills identified by the participants. The SDL theory however, addressed all of the identified attitudes and skills, and once again, brought a different perspective to the subject. In fact, the identified attitudes and skills provided a good description of a self directed learner. Self directed learners have been cast for example, as self disciplined, proactive inquirers, who are competent, analytical, reflective, and intrinsically motivated to learn. They also seek to apply their learning to meet their life's demands (Knowles, 1989; Merriam & Caffarella, 1999). Self directed learners have also been characterized as genuinely interested in the subject, possessing an attitude of can do, and having strong listening, note taking and risk taking skills (Garrison, 1997; Hiemstra & Brockett, 1994). All of these characteristics were identified by the participants as facilitating their transfer efforts.

One of the findings, related to the participants' motivations, was however, not in keeping with many of the transfer studies. The transfer research found a positive relationship between an

individual's choice of training program and transfer (Facteau, Dobbins, Russell, Ladd & Kudisch, 1995; Mathieu, Tannenbaum & Salas, 1992; Baldwin & Magjuka, 1991). As will be recalled, three of the participants were encouraged by their managers to participate in the respective courses. The difference in this study's findings may be due to the participants viewing their manager's recommendation for the training as highly credible and, therefore, of benefit to their jobs and careers. It may also be due to the participants' own personal desire to enhance their job performance and advance their careers, as noted in Clark, Dobbins and Ladd's transfer research (1993). Further, the participants may have regarded their manager's suggestion as a caring gesture. They may have associated the suggestion with a caring mentor or coach who was concerned with their career development, in keeping with the adult learning theories, most notably the situated cognition theory (Hansman, 2001). These participants further had an intent to learn in order to address and respond more effectively to the demands of their current work activities and their career aspirations, in keeping with the SDL theory (Hammond & Collins, 1991; Knowles, 1980; Tough, 1979).

The how of the participants' transfer process, or the steps that they employed when transferring their learning, were characterized as: a) a subconscious, b) an analytical and c) an action oriented process. The subconscious process was described as akin to an epiphany and involved the learners making a connection between what they learned during the course, as it became relevant to their job demands, and applying it. The analytical process involved the learners' reflection, dialogue with others and desire to apply what was learned, including making conscious efforts to change their previous behaviors and perspectives. Finally, the action oriented process involved for example, the participants taking notes and referring to them, discussing the course materials, and sharing their experiences and receiving feedback from

others. This process also included the learners having a mentor, coaching staff members and putting things into practice.

The subconscious transfer process was associated with informational learning or learning that was additive in nature, changing “what the learners knew” as opposed to how they knew (Baumgartner, 2001, p. 16). Such learning “expand[s] and strengthens existing knowledge, skills and values” (Schugurensky, 2000, p. 5). It is possible that the informational learning participants were not analytical or action oriented in their transfer processes because their learning “fit comfortably in their existing frames of reference” (Mezirow, 1997a, p. 7). They, therefore, did not see a need to change their behaviors or were not affected in a major way by their learning. The analytical transfer process, on the other hand, was associated primarily with transformational learning while the action oriented process was associated primarily with the SDL theory. Elements of the situated cognition theory were also present in the how of the participants’ transfer processes. Many of the participants for example, either established a relationship with a mentor, coached their staff members or discussed the course materials with and solicited feedback from their colleagues on their application efforts (Hansman, 2001; Merriam & Caffarella, 1999). Interaction, discussion and feedback, basic precepts of adult learning, were important aspects of the how of many of the participants’ transfer processes (Brookfield, 1986; Mezirow, 1990; Hansman, 2001).

The transfer research, on the other hand, addressed the how of the participants’ transfer processes through the metacognitive abilities (Ford, Smith, Weissbein, Gully & Salas, 1998; Kozlowski, Gully, Brown, Salas & Nason, 2001), the self management and goal setting learning strategies (Gist & Bavetta, 1990; Gist, Stevens & Bavetta, 1991), and the low and high road transfer mechanisms (Perkins & Salomon, 1988). The transfer research, under the umbrella of

the individuals' characteristics, supported the findings. The metacognitive abilities, self management learning strategy and high road transfer mechanism, all associated with higher levels of transfer, were akin to the analytical and action oriented transfer processes.

In many respects, the learning theories captured much more comprehensively the how of the majority of the participants' transfer processes. The theories not only delved into the cognitive and activity based aspects of the participants' processes but addressed them in a manner that was more in keeping with the participants' lived accounts. The learning theories also addressed and explained in much greater detail the importance of interaction, dialogue and feedback, mentoring and coaching activities, and practice opportunities for example, to the how of the participants' transfer processes.

The individuals' characteristics were clearly a crucial element in the learning and transfer equation. The second cluster of themes in this study related to the training program's design and development features, the second element in the equation. The next section of this chapter summarizes the themes related to the training program, further addressing the what research question, as well as when transfer entered the participants' learning experience research question.

### **Training Program's Design and Development Features**

*I keep six honest serving men (they taught me all I know). Their names are What and Why and When and How and Where and Who. Rudyard Kipling.*

The participants, in continuing to address the what of their lived transfer experiences, identified an array of training methods that facilitated their transfer efforts. While these methods generally included the theory, video instruction, case studies, roleplaying and the availability of reference materials prior to and following the training program, the participants placed a particular emphasis on discourse; the application of the learning to life's situations; and learning

by doing. The participants also discussed when transfer entered their learning experience. The following section summarizes these findings.

In recounting the various training methods that facilitated the participants' transfer efforts, Jared identified the theory, instruction and interaction with others as the most useful methods in the POMP. Blake recollected that the Myers Briggs personality type instrument, the theory, and problem solving and communications exercises were important to his POMP experiences. With respect to the most useful training methods employed in the Power of Communications course, John recounted that the theory, interaction and exercises were important. For Bonnie, the team exercises and the theory were the most useful. Finally, Joseph found the testing of assumptions and the desert walk team building exercises to be the most useful training methods to his transfer efforts.

Finally, in terms of the Leadership training, Janice found all of the training program methods useful but placed a particular emphasis on self reflection, interaction with others and the mock interview. Finally, Susan noted that the conflict resolution exercises, the instructors' and the participants' feedback, the interactions, her Myers Briggs profile results, and her conflict management instrument results were all useful to her transfer efforts.

Interestingly, while a number of the participants participated in the same course, they identified different training methods as enhancing their transfer efforts. Jared, for example, preferred the theory, the method of instruction and the exchange between participants in the POMP while Blake placed an emphasis on the problem solving and communications exercises, as well as on his Myers Briggs diagnostic instrument results. Janice and Susan, on the other hand, both agreed on the importance of hearing about the other participants' experiences in the Leadership training. Janice however, placed an emphasis on self reflection, the mock interview

and having the opportunity to practice what she learned while Susan emphasized her conflict management and Myers Briggs diagnostic instrument results, as well as the conflict resolution exercises. John, Bonnie and Joseph, while all participating in the POC, also identified different methods as facilitative of their transfer. This finding speaks to the need for adult educators to understand and address the learners' preferred training methods during a course, as training methods act to facilitate learning, retention and application.

While an array of training methods were identified by the participants as facilitating their transfer efforts, four themes emerged upon further analysis of the data. The discourse theme related to the value of the other course participants' opinions and experiences, during and following the training program, to the participants' transfer efforts. During the course, those opinions and experiences assisted the participants for example, in confirming their learning and changing their perspectives. Following the course, while Susan was the only participant who participated in a follow-up activity, the majority of the participants believed that a follow-up session and networking opportunities would have assisted them in understanding how the course materials might have been more effectively applied or in identifying possible new application opportunities. The participants' notion of discourse was in keeping with Mezirow's. Mezirow (1996; 1998) posited that individuals engage in dialogue as a means of presenting and assessing their points of view, and understanding competing viewpoints. The purpose of the discourse was to change perspectives and yield better judgements. Gee (1997), on the other hand, coming from the situated cognition perspective, regarded discourse as a means of talking, acting, interacting or thinking for example, that allows individuals to recognize socially significant identities such as that of an executive, a feminist or a lawyer.

In this research, Mezirow's definition of discourse best addressed many of the

participants' accounts of the process that they employed when engaging in a learning activity. Those accounts related for example, to the importance of the participants discussing, sharing experiences and observing the other course participants to their own learning and transfer efforts. Many of the research participants remarked on the value of those activities in changing their perspectives and in appreciating different circumstances. Gee's definition of discourse, on the other hand, related primarily to the participants' accounts of the workplace factors that both facilitated or inhibited their transfer efforts. Those accounts related primarily to their managers who oft times, were averse to risk taking or not accepting ideas that they were not comfortable with. The culture of the organization seemingly positioned the managers as the ultimate decision makers, who possessed the socially significant identities.

The application of the learning to every day life situations theme related to the application of the learning in the different contexts of the participants' lives - professional, personal and social. The participants believed that the relevance of the course to their life in general, was key to their transfer efforts. This theme also related to learners having opportunities, during the training program, to examine "real life" work situations as a means of enhancing their transfer. The real life opportunities provided the participants with a better understanding of how to apply their learning. They were consequently, more comfortable in their application efforts, upon their return to the workplace. Finally, the learning by doing theme related to the participants' need to learn through applied learning. By having sufficient opportunities, both during and following the training program, to practice their reinforced or newly learned knowledge, skills or attitudes, the participants believed that their transfer efforts were enhanced. The participants further believed that such practice opportunities assisted them in making the linkages between what they learned and applied in their work activities.

The transfer research, once again, confirmed most of the training program findings. The research however, did not place any emphasis on the importance of the learners' applying their learning to the different contexts of their lives. The transformational learning theory however, did place an emphasis on providing learners with opportunities, during the course, to practice and apply their learning to real life situations, within the context of their own lives. Such opportunities assist the learners in engaging in discussions about the presented concepts, and in identifying and critically examining their assumptions about their professional, personal and social lives. These varied contexts are essential to the learners' meaning making process. In adult education, learners are viewed from a wholistic perspective "as workers, spouses, parents and citizens" (Knowles, 1980, p. 45). Addressing the varied contexts of the learners' lives is, therefore, critical. The transformational learning theory, relative to the transfer research, provided a more fullsome understanding of the importance of providing real life practice opportunities, within the different contexts of the learners' lives.

The when of the participants' transfer experiences related to when exactly they first started to think about transferring the course content to their work activities and other points in time when they were aware of transfer opportunities. The participants' first awareness of transfer were varied, almost as varied as the participants themselves. Joseph was the only participant who had no awareness of when he first started to think about transfer. The majority of the participants however, recalled thinking about application opportunities in the before and after training program stages.

In the before stage, the majority of the participants recollected thinking about the opportunity to develop knowledge, skills or attitudes that were required in their work activities. In the after stage, the participants focused on application opportunities at work and home.

During the course however, the majority of the participants recalled thinking about the instructor, the course's organization and the content, rather than about possible application opportunities.

This latter finding speaks to the importance of adult educators creating an awareness of or facilitating the learners in identifying possible application opportunities, during the course. It also speaks to the importance of adult educators and managers assisting the learners in making the linkages between their training program experiences and their application contexts (Brookfield, 1993; Caffarella, 1994; Lave, 1997). Moreover, it addresses the importance of ensuring that a work related component is included in the training program and of providing the learners with opportunities to practice their new behaviors. Such measures help learners in understanding the relevance of their learning and application opportunities, and in developing a level of comfort with their new behaviors, thereby facilitating their transfer efforts (Brookfield, 1993; Lemke, 1997). Perhaps as Ottoson (1997) posited, as much time may need to be devoted, during the training program, "to preparing the participants for application as in helping them understand the innovation itself" (p. 106).

While the transfer research and adult learning literatures did not address the specific issue of when transfer entered the learners' learning experience, they both identified various strategies that facilitated the learners' awareness of transfer opportunities, throughout all three program stages. Both literatures noted for example, the importance of a transfer partnership between the manager, trainee and trainer, during all three training program stages (Broad & Newstrom, 1992; Taylor, 2000). Those literatures also noted, in the before training program stage, the importance of the manager communicating with and providing the learners with clarity about what they were expected to apply upon their return to the workplace, for example. During the training program,

the importance of the adult educator facilitating and allocating sufficient time for discussions was identified as enhancing transfer (Nolan, 1994; Yorks, O'Neil, Marsick, Lamm, Kolodny & Nilson, 1998). Finally, providing opportunities for the learners to perform the trained tasks, upon their return to the workplace, was cited as enhancing the learners' awareness of and facilitating their transfer efforts (Olivero, Bane & Kopelman, 1997; Ottoson, 1994).

The training program was clearly another crucial element in the learning and transfer equation. The final cluster of themes identified in this study related to the organizational climate characteristics, the third element in the equation. The next section summarizes the organizational climate themes, further addressing the what research question.

### **Organizational Climate Characteristics**

*Culture is a consequence of the way you run the place and your performance. Larry Bossidy, CEO, Allied Signal.*

The two organizational climate themes further addressed the overarching research question - what were the employees' lived experiences with transfer? These two themes related to the importance of an open and supportive culture, and the major transfer challenges of time, evolving oneself as a learner and the work environment. The following section summarizes the findings.

The open and supportive culture was described as a workplace context that was open to risk taking and freely discussing new ideas; based on trusting relationships; and supportive of the learners' learning and application efforts. The participants believed that their managers' support, which included discussions about the benefits of the course, how their learning might be applied and possible job assignment opportunities, was an important aspect of the culture. They further

believed that the support that they received from their mentor, coach, colleagues and staff for their learning and application efforts were also important aspects of the culture. The importance of developing a Personal Learning Plan was also noted.

The specific support that the participants received from their managers during the three training program stages, a key transfer factor, was quite varied. Three of the participants' managers, before the training program, suggested that the training would be useful to them and encouraged them to participate (John, Blake and Susan). For Joseph, Jared and Janice however, their managers' support consisted of simply signing the registration form. Only Bonnie's manager actively discussed the course outline and the benefits of the course before the training. During the training, only two of the participants (Susan and Janice) received support from their managers. Their managers either discussed the training material with them or provided them with time to focus and remain on the training. Following the course, four of the participants received their managers' support. This support was in the form of either discussing the benefits of the course or what the individual had learned (Bonnie and Blake), supporting the participant's application efforts (Janice), mentoring the participant (Susan) and drafting a Personal Learning Plan (Susan). The participants received the most managerial support in the before and after training program stages.

The participants identified the major challenges to their transfer efforts as time, evolving themselves as learners, and the work environment - organization's culture and bureaucracy. Time was raised, before the course, as the work demands necessitating participation in a shorter course, even though a shorter course might not adequately address the learners' needs. During the course, the lack of time to practice and receive feedback from the instructor and other

participants resulted in the research participants not being comfortable in their application efforts, upon their return to the office. After the course, the participants believed that with the workload that awaited them, there was insufficient time to reflect on what was learned and to apply more of their new or reinforced behaviors. There was also a belief that sometimes it was just easier and more expedient to continue to do things the same old way rather than to take the time to apply their new behaviors.

The evolving oneself as a learner challenge related to the participants needing to evolve or change themselves. Evolving themselves by changing their attitudes and perspectives on matters for example, so that they were more open to learning and seeing things in new ways. Evolving by knowing themselves better as individuals so that they could for example, better resolve conflict situations and finally, evolving themselves by developing their skills and being committed to continuous learning. The work environment challenge, on the other hand, related to the organization's culture and bureaucracy. The organization's culture presented a challenge as new ideas or new ways of doing things were not readily accepted by the participants' managers or peers. Finally, the bureaucracy was a challenge as the organizational structure was viewed as inflexible, decisions were taken only after lengthy committee review and there was a "hierarchical way of looking at things".

The transfer research supported the organizational climate findings. As will be recalled, the organizational climate characteristics in the transfer research were depicted as the transfer climate, managerial support and practice opportunities. The transfer research and adult learning theories were quite similar in their approaches to creating a facilitative organizational climate. The situated cognition theory however, placed a particular emphasis on the social nature of

learning, within the organizational context or the community of practice. The theory described for example, the interactions between the learners, the community in which they function, and the tools employed within the community. The theory also placed an importance on the learners' front line experiences and practice opportunities, as well as the involvement of mentors and coaches in the employees' learning and application efforts (Steel, 2001). In situated cognition, the transfer climate, managerial support and practice opportunities were not separate entities but rather, were integral to and integrated into the practices of the community. This theory, therefore, brought the three transfer elements of the organizational climate characteristics together in a more comprehensive fashion.

The situated cognition theory, while addressing many of the participants' accounts of a facilitative culture, was remiss at addressing the participants' need to have their ideas accepted by the community, to reflect and to proactively seek to apply their learning efforts. Cocreation, critical reflection and proactivity are three conditions which facilitate employees informal and incidental learning in an organization (Marsick & Watkins, 2001).

Within the situated cognition theory, there was also a sense of a power structure in the community of practice. The theory for example, positioned the managers, mentors and coaches as possessing and modeling the required behaviors. This structure thus left one to question how employees' new ideas or practices were accepted by or integrated into the community. Moreover, learning took place primarily through observing and participating in the existing work practices and cultural norms. There was little discussion as to how an independent learner's learning was accommodated or, whether and if inefficient or ineffective practices were questioned and addressed by the community. Were for example, inefficient and ineffective

practices perpetuated as a result of the community's work practices and cultural norms? How were new ideas generated and integrated given the need for the learners to behave in accordance with the cultural norms (Fenwick, 2000; Merriam & Caffarella, 1999)? How were learners who proactively sought to apply their learning received by members of the community? The situated cognition theory did not adequately address such matters and did not, therefore, comprehensively address the participants' workplace learning context accounts.

The innovative and learning organization principles however, addressed the need for employees to be empowered and to develop the habit of learning, asking questions, soliciting feedback and sharing their learning. The culture, in turn, was described as being people-centered, open to risk taking, respectful and trusting, and one where power was used supportively. Experimentation, collaboration, managerial support and providing practice opportunities were all key features of the learning organization (Marsick & Watkins, 1994; Watkins & Marsick, 1993). The learning process included employees and managers asking questions, providing feedback, sharing learning experiences, modeling, mentoring and coaching, and having continuous learning and application opportunities. The innovative and learning organization principles, therefore, brought a more comprehensive understanding to the organizational climate findings. In fact, the innovative and learning organization principles wove the facilitative culture characteristics, the importance of discourse, the practices of the community, the learner, the training program and the major transfer challenges into a more coherent, wholistic approach.

Finally, the learning organization addressed all of the challenges identified by the participants. The transfer research, on the other hand, while validating the participants'

workplace context accounts did so in terms of the transfer climate, managerial support and practice opportunity features. The transfer approach, for the most part, consisted of one off studies, providing little understanding of the relationships between the three workplace learning context features. The transfer research, unlike the innovative and learning organization principles, thus left the reader to discern the possible relationships between those three context features. In that respect, the transfer research was much more siloed in its approach.

Throughout the interviews and focus group discussions, the participants referred to the importance of formal and informal learning activities to their transfer efforts, further addressing the what of the employees' lived experiences. As formal and informal learning activities were important to the participants' transfer efforts, they warrant a separate discussion. The following section, therefore, briefly summarizes and discusses the findings related to formal and informal learning.

### **Formal And Informal Learning**

*The employer generally gets the employee he deserves. Sir Walter Bilbey.*

In exploring the participants' transfer accounts, elements of both formal and informal learning were evident. In fact, the findings of this research suggested that both formal and informal learning activities were important to the participants' transfer efforts. As outlined in Chapter 1, formal training was defined as "formally structured and sequentially organized [learning opportunities], in which learners follow a program of study or a series of experiences planned and directed by a teacher or trainer and generally leading to some formal recognition of educational performance" (Statistics Canada, 2001, p. 58). Formal learning is typically classroom based, highly structured and institutionally sponsored (Marsick & Watkins, 2001).

Informal training, on the other hand, was defined as “training that is generally acquired while performing regular tasks (learning by doing) at work or, observing somebody else performing them and that is by nature not planned nor structured” (Statistics Canada, 2001, p. 59). Informal learning involves the learner’s intentionality and includes various forms of learning from experience (Garrick, 1998; Livingstone, 1999; Marsick & Watkins, 2001). Informal learning activities include for example, coaching and mentoring strategies, networking and performance planning (Marsick & Watkins, 2001; Watkins & Marsick, 1993).

The informal learning aspect in this research, unlike the Statistics Canada (2001) definition, did however, involve planned and structured learning activities. These activities included developing mentoring and coaching relationships, drafting a Personal Learning Plan (PLP) and sharing training program experiences during a weekly meeting, for example. Through such informal structured and semi structured learning activities, employees can come to understand the processes of the culture, what counts as knowledge, and receive recognition and feedback while developing their new skills and applying their new behaviors (Garrison, 1997; Hansman, 2001). In fact, a Conference Board of Canada (1999) study noted that above average performing Canadian organizations were 30% more likely to have informal learning activities, most particularly mentoring or coaching programs.

Many of the above noted informal learning activities were also identified in the transfer research, subsumed in the formal training findings. In the before training program stage for example, the transfer research identified learning contracts or PLPs, and discussions between the trainees and their managers regarding what the trainees needed to learn during the course and apply in their work activities, subsequent to the training. In the during program stage,

discussions and feedback from the instructor and the other course participants concerning the participants' ideas and application efforts were also noted. These activities are not necessarily structured nor planned. Finally, in the after program stage, an organizational culture that included mentoring, coaching, collaboration among peers and practice opportunities, all informal learning practices, were identified as facilitating transfer (e.g., Broad & Newstrom, 1992; Fox, 1994; Bowne, 1999).

A broader definition of informal learning such as Livingstone's (2002) and Watkins and Marsick's (1992), rather than Statistics Canada's, appear to more appropriately capture the findings of this study. Informal learning in this study included planned and structured learning activities. A reference to informal learning such as "any activity involving the pursuit of understanding, knowledge or skill which occurs without the presence of externally imposed curricular criteria" (Livingstone, p. 4) or learning that "can be planned or unplanned but it usually involves some degree of conscious awareness that learning is taking place" appears to be more in order (Watkins & Marsick, p. 289). Further, for purposes of this study, the transfer of learning was initially defined as the knowledge, skills or attitudes that an individual gains from a "training program". A training program was, in turn, defined as a *planned learning experience* or formal training activity that affects change in an individual's knowledge, skills or attitudes. On the basis of this study's findings, the revised transfer definition included the notions of both formal and informal means of learning as follows: prior learned or new knowledge, skills or attitudes that an individual gains from *learning activities* that are effectively applied in the performance of their work, personal or community responsibilities.

Finally, this research confirmed Watkins and Marsick's (1992) statement that "formally

organized classroom instruction is one answer to helping people learn but organizations have found that training is not enough to meet the demands of continuous learning” (p. 288). Both formal and informal learning activities were important to the participants’ transfer efforts. The definition of workplace learning for purposes of this study, defined as “the ongoing formal and informal acquisition, both on and off the job, of individual, team, and organizational skills, knowledge and abilities, ... [including] a mindset that views every experience as potential learning” was also confirmed (Marsick & Watkins, 1992, p. 11).

Now that the three primary transfer sources - individuals’ characteristics, training program and organizational climate - or the crucial elements of an adult learning theory - learner, learning process and context respectively, have been accounted for, our attention turns to a summation of the findings related to the possible interrelationships between those three transfer sources. The interrelationships discussion further addressed the how of the employees’ transfer experiences.

#### **Were there Interrelationships between the Individuals’ Characteristics, Training Program’s Design and Development Features, and Organizational Climate Characteristics?**

The participants were invited to discuss the how of the interrelationships between the three primary transfer sources. The interrelationships were not easy for the participants to describe and their responses were quite varied during the interview and focus group discussions. Their descriptions appeared to be based on their unique perspectives on the subject, their experiences in transferring their learning and their assumptions about the three transfer sources.

As will be recalled, three of the participants depicted the how of the possible interrelationships between the three transfer sources as the blending of their professional, personal and social learning needs, or the relevancy of the course content to the different contexts

of their lives. Three other participants depicted the interplay as the employees' general openness to learning, positive attitudes towards the training program, and their manager's support for their learning and application efforts. Two of the participants described the interplay as targeted training programs. One of those participants suggested that the organization must first identify, plan and target the necessary training, including targeting the employees who should participate. The other participant addressed targeted training as the course's direct application in the employees' work activities, such as a local area network (lan) computer course.

In examining the participants' interview accounts, the focus group data and the eight main themes, there did not appear to be a single cluster of themes nor transfer source that was more conducive to the participants' transfer efforts. All three transfer sources appeared to be equally important. Moreover, there was no apparent, definitive boundary between the three clusters of themes. Rather, there appeared to be a permeability between them, with each cluster dependent on the other. In fact, two of the training program themes were associated with the organizational climate. The participants for example, emphasized having application opportunities and participating in follow-up activities with the other course participants, upon their return to the workplace. The two individuals' characteristic themes also related to both the training program and organizational climate. The how of the participants' transfer processes for example, related to the importance of discourse and employees having application opportunities, both during and following the learning activity, respectively. Finally, the participants' motivations were associated with both the training program and organizational climate. The participants' need for their specific learning goals to be sufficiently addressed during the course, and their motivations being premised on the demands of the different contexts of their lives,

spoke to the training program and organizational climate, respectively.

From the perspective of a wide angle lens, there appeared to be an intricate interplay between the three transfer sources. The learners' specific characteristics, the content to be learned, the interactions among the learners or the social process of learning, and the demands of the learners' lives, all appeared to be equally important to the participants' learning and transfer efforts (Caffarella, 1993; Ottoson, 1995b; Taylor & Blunt, 2001).

From the perspective of a telescopic lens, transfer appeared to be more complex, dependent on a delicate and intricate interweaving of the three transfer sources and the numerous variables within those sources. As will be recalled, all of the participants with the exception of one, transferred their learning. In examining the transfer variables that facilitated the participants' transfer efforts, as identified in Table 4, no one variable accounted for the participants' transfer. What was seemingly important to one participant's transfer efforts, did not appear to be as important to another in his/her transfer efforts.

Moreover, all three clusters of themes appeared to be equally important to the participants' transfer efforts. The individuals' characteristics for example, influenced if learning would take place, what learning would transpire and whether the learning would be applied. The training program, in turn, influenced what application and real life situations would be addressed, the degree of dialogue that would be permitted, and whether the learners' learning goals and preferred training methods for example, would be taken into account. Finally, the organizational climate influenced the participants' motivations and course expectations, the real life training program situations that would be addressed during the learning activity, and the application of the learners' learning in their work activities.

It was from the telescopic lens perspective that transfer appeared to be a complex “web of influences whose interaction shape[d] application” (Ottoson, 1995b, p. 13). In many respects, this research provided further evidence to Ottoson’s “web of influences” statement as no one particular cluster of themes, nor particular variables within and between those clusters accounted for the participants’ transfer efforts. Rather different variables appeared to be more conducive to the individual participants’ transfer of learning. Variables that may rest on the different issues that the learners face within themselves, when learning in a training program, and when addressing the specific demands and conditions of their organizational climate. Transfer appeared to involve a proactive, complex, intricate and personal journey, dependent on the interplay between the three transfer sources and the respective variables within those sources.

As two of the participants noted, transfer is “a synergy, it’s the whole combination that will make it work or not” and “you have to mesh the three [transfer sources] together. I don’t think you can look at the three separately. ... It’s complex. ... You change one element and it changes the whole scenario”. Perhaps, as Ottoson (1995b) posited, at the telescopic level whether and how application occurs does not depend just on the educational program, the innovation, the learner or the context but rather “there is likely no single strand to follow towards application; instead, there is a web of influences whose interaction shapes application” (p. 13). On the basis of the participants’ experiences, at the more micro level, application appears to be a “complex, multidimensional process, requir[ing] multiple kinds of knowledge, including knowledge of the thing, the context, the practical, and the skill to put it all together” (Ottoson, 1995b, p. 15). I would add that application also included the learners’ attitudes towards learning in general, the learning process itself and workplace learning context, as well as their ability to

change their attitudes and take action.

In examining the possible interrelationships from the perspective of the three adult learning theories, the learners' motivations, interests, attitudes and expectations were all framed by the context of the learners' lives. By considering their context, adult learners learn a particular content for a particular reason. The learners' motivations, interests, attitudes and expectations were further shaped and modified through interactions with others, in the context of their social groupings (Candy, 1991; Chovenac, 1998; Knowles, 1980). The training program or the learning process, which includes interaction with others and having real life practice opportunities was, in turn, necessary as "most learning requires the acquisition of a way of thinking about a subject" (Candy, 1991, p. 283). Interaction and practice opportunities, in turn, require a supportive, caring, respectful, trusting and open learning environment, in both the training program and organizational climate (Brookfield, 1995; Cranton, 1998). In adult learning, the learner, learning process and learning context are intricately interwoven and equally dependent on one another.

### **Contribution of the Research to Scholarly Knowledge**

*If you want one year of prosperity, grow grain. If you want ten years of prosperity, grow trees. If you want one hundred years of prosperity, grow people. Chinese proverb.*

The next section of this chapter discusses the research's contribution to scholarly knowledge. These contributions relate to the transfer research, adult learning theories and some measurement of transfer issues, as illustrated in the following discussion.

#### *The Transfer Research and Adult Learning Theories*

The participants' transfer experiences, while varied, were supported by the transfer and

adult learning literatures. In many respects, these literatures were similar in their treatment of the findings. This was particularly so for the transfer studies of recent years which attempted to understand the transfer of more complex behaviors. Behaviors which required the learners to employ metacognitive learning strategies and to adapt the training materials to their workplace, not simply “reproducing [the] behaviors or motor skills as closely as possible to the training material” (Smith, Ford & Kozlowski, 1997, p. 89). The adult learning theories, on the other hand, by emphasizing the importance of the learners’ self awareness, reflection, critical examination of their assumptions about situations, and need to use the materials in a practical way for example, appeared to be particularly well positioned to address the issue of adaptability.

The three adult learning theories brought a different and valuable perspective to the transfer of learning subject matter. A perspective that, in many instances, provided a broader and more comprehensive understanding to the participants’ experiences. Those experiences related primarily to the identified attitudes and skills, the how of the participants’ transfer processes, the relevance of the learning to the learners’ professional, personal and social contexts, and finally, the importance of the organizational climate and informal learning. Moreover, the adult learning theories integrated the quantitative, transfer research findings into a more coherent body of knowledge, illuminating the interplay between the three primary transfer sources. Adult education principles and practices appeared to be well positioned to enhance the adult learners’ transfer efforts. In fact, transfer was “a key concept in adult learning theory” (Taylor, 1997, p. 2), a key assumption on which the theories were premised.

The three learning theories examined in this research captured quite well the participants’ transfer accounts. The SDL theory provided a sound understanding of the desire to learn theme.

In fact, the motivations, attitudes and skills identified by the participants provided a fairly accurate depiction of a self directed learner. The transformational learning theory, which had the most explanatory power in addressing the training program's findings, focused on the learners' underlying cognitive processes, and the learner centered design and development features. This theory explained the participants' mental construction of their learning experiences, their ability to critically reflect on those experiences, and their need to dialogue with others and take action. All of these activities affect changes in the learners' "performance, achievement and productivity" (Mezirow, 1985, p. 148). This theory also provided a comprehensive understanding of the importance of discourse and real life practice opportunities, within the different contexts of the learners' lives, to their transfer efforts. The situated cognition theory, in placing a particular emphasis on learners interacting within their community of practice, and mentoring, modeling and coaching activities, had the most explanatory power for the organizational climate findings. Finally, all three theories were relevant in explaining the how of the participants' transfer processes and the interrelationships between the three transfer sources.

The differences between the transfer and adult learning literatures likely stem from the "different questions [they ask] on the same subject" (Schwab, 1978, p. 330). The transfer research is primarily based on cognitive, human factor and industrial psychology. The cognitivists tend to focus on the psychological principles underlying learning and skill acquisition, human factorists on training design, and industrial-organizationalists on individual differences and organizational factors associated with training and transfer (Quinones & Ehrenstein, 1997). The adult learning theories, on the other hand, are premised on humanist, social learning and constructivist assumptions. Humanists, in which the SDL theory was

included, emphasize human nature, human potential and human emotions, and regard learning as involving the learners' motivations and responsibility. Social learning views learning as occurring as a function of observation, interaction, environment and individual behaviors. Social learning, which includes informal learning activities such as mentoring and coaching, focuses on the social context in which the learning occurs. The constructivists, in which all three learning theories were included, regard learners as constructing their knowledge based on their experiences, with meaning making involving both mental activity and social interaction (Merriam & Caffarella, 1999). The social and cultural contexts are important to the construction of the individuals' knowledge and meaning making (O'Connor, 1998).

As the participants noted, the social and cultural contexts of their organization both facilitated and inhibited their transfer efforts. One could argue that the participants' experiences with the organizational climate further influenced their learning, or the construction of their knowledge, during the training program. Understanding what knowledge would be acceptable in their work activities for example, the participants may have disregarded some of the training program content. They may consequently, have not retained or transferred aspects of the course due to their experiences with the organizational culture.

On the basis of this study's findings, transfer appeared to be a proactive, complex, intricate and personal journey, dependent on the interplay between the three transfer sources and the numerous variables within and between those sources. The learners' self awareness and reflection, awareness of transfer opportunities, desire to affect the necessary changes in their behaviors, and willingness to take action were all necessary to their transfer of learning. The learners' active participation in interactions with others, and their understanding of their

personal, social, business and cultural contexts were also necessary. As earnest as individuals may be in their learning and transfer efforts however, they were only one element in the learning and transfer equation. The training program and organizational climate were equally important!

While the adult learning theories are well positioned to address transfer, not all adult education training programs adhere to the principles and practices of these theories. The concept of transfer is, therefore, often not at “the forefront” of all education programs, thereby impeding the adult learners’ transfer efforts. Perhaps, as a result of this study, transfer will begin to rightfully assume its position at “the forefront” of training programs (Ottoson, 1995a, p. 27). As noted, adult learners typically engage in learning activities with the intent of applying their learning. Adult educators, therefore, need to be mindful of this fact and ensure in the planning, design and delivery of the course that every effort is made to facilitate the participants’ learning and application efforts. Simply imparting knowledge is not sufficient! Adult educators must focus on the application of that knowledge as well.

While this research illuminated the interplay between the three transfer sources, a truly comprehensive understanding of the interplay may remain as mysterious as the dynamics of human behavior. This however, is not necessarily a shortcoming of this research. In fact, “no picture is ever complete, ... what is needed is many perspectives, many voices, before we can achieve deep understandings of social phenomenon” (Lincoln & Denzin, 1998, p. 417). Further research is required and more individuals’ perspectives given voice.

In final analysis, this study gained an understanding of the participants’ lived experiences with transfer, particularly as they related to training programs that required employees to adapt their new behaviors to their work activities. The hermeneutic phenomenological research

approach was very valuable in unearthing, organizing, describing and interpreting the participants' experiences. The hermeneutic phenomenological approach, by examining and interpreting the participants' lived transfer experiences, provided a "deeper understanding of the nature of the meaning of [the participants'] everyday [transfer] experiences" (van Manen, 1997, pp. 9-10). In "trying to cobble" the participants' stories together, interpreting their stories and letting their voices resonate throughout the text, this research captured the depth and richness of the participants' transfer experiences (Lincoln & Denzin, 1998). That depth and richness provided a different and valuable perspective on transfer, and illuminated the interrelationships between the three primary transfer sources.

While the purpose of hermeneutic phenomenology, unlike grounded theory, is not to "generate or discover a theory" (Creswell, 1998, p. 56), this research did contribute to a more fullsome understanding of the three adult learning theories. The characteristics of a self directed learner for example, as depicted in the theory, were confirmed by the participants' transfer experiences as they related to the desire to learn theme. The participants' motivations, course expectations, attitudes and skills, were in keeping with those of the self directed learning theory. This qualitative research methodology, therefore, added to the much needed qualitative research regarding the self directed learning theory (Merriam & Caffarella, 1999).

While the situated cognition theory best addressed the organizational climate, the integration of new ideas into the community, identified as a short coming of the theory, was raised as an issue by the participants (Fenwick, 2000). Many of the participants noted for example, that new ideas were not always welcomed by their managers and colleagues, and that even though some of the practices had been inefficient, it was understood that they were not to be

questioned. As a consequence, bad practices may have been perpetuated within the community.

Finally, the transformational learning theory helped in explaining the participants' learning process experiences. The discourse, application of the learning to life's situations, learning by doing and when transfer entered the learning experience themes, all addressed the importance of the context to the learners' learning and transfer experience. The theory's criticism of under theorizing the context, did not appear to be justified on the basis of this research's findings (Fenwick, 2000; Merriam & Caffarella, 1999)

#### *Measurement of Transfer Issues*

This study identified a number of measurement issues that contributed to scholarly knowledge. These issues related to the employees, the organization and the type of transfer. The following section discusses these issues.

When assessing whether transfer occurred, adult educators must establish what anticipated changes or outcomes were expected to occur as a result of the training program. They must also establish where or in what settings the learners were expected to apply the newly acquired knowledge, skills and attitudes, and when the outcomes were to be measured (Ford, 1994; Guskey, 2000; Laker, 1990). Further, they must decide how often and how to evaluate the transfer, as well as who should be involved in the evaluation (Kirkpatrick, 2001). The measurement of "transfer outcomes depends on how long the knowledge, skills and attitudes must be retained in order to conclude that successful transfer has occurred" (Ford, 1994, p. 30). Further, in measuring transfer, it is important to distinguish whether the employees' observed practices, subsequent to the training, were truly different from their previous practices, and to determine whether the observed differences were due to the training activity alone or due to other

factors (Guskey, 2000). Adult educators must, therefore, be involved in both the planning and evaluation of the learning activity (Worthen, Sanders & Fitzpatrick, 1997).

On the basis of this study's findings, employees should be engaged in the measurement of their transfer efforts. The employees' feedback on whether the course was a reinforcement of their knowledge, skills or attitudes or, whether the course resulted in new knowledge, skills or attitudes, potentially resulting in truly different behaviors, should be solicited. A reinforcement of the employees' behaviors however, while possibly not resulting in truly different behaviors may none the less result in important behavioral changes. Those changes, though not necessarily observable, may result in the employees' enhanced job performance. Indirect benefits such as the employees' enhanced self confidence in performing their job tasks or their changed attitudes for example, may be important to their overall performance efforts. Other indirect benefits such as the employees' improved team performance or capacity to cope with change, while important to the organization's overall performance, may also not be observable or measurable (Bloom & Lafleur, 1999). Moreover, the observed differences in employees' performance may be due to the formal training activities in conjunction with informal learning practices such as mentoring or coaching activities, reading more widely about the subject or seeking application opportunities in their personal and social lives. Assessing whether the observed differences are truly different and due solely to the training activity may be quite a feat particularly, if the employees' feedback or involvement in the measurement of their transfer efforts is not solicited.

The research participants also cited different motivations for participating in the courses and recollected different aspects of the courses that were germane to their specific learning needs and goals. They, therefore, appeared to have retained and applied different knowledge, skills or

attitudes from the other participants. Without a clear understanding of what learning outcomes were expected, both organizationally and employee wise, the measurement of transfer may become quite difficult. It is also important to bear in mind that even though specific transfer outcomes may have been identified by the employee for measurement purposes, other important outcomes may result from the training that were not identified at the outset. As one of the research participants noted “maybe I think I forgot some of the stuff [that I learned] but I didn’t because it changes the way the wheels turn. ... It’s not applied literally, it is applied in a different way”. Ottoson (1997) similarly cautioned that “to detect application in practice, evaluators need to be attuned to the multiple forms an innovation can take and the multiple ways and times in which it can be applied. To look for the innovation as taught in an educational program may be to miss the one invented and applied in practice” (p. 106). Tough (2002), in addressing informal learning, also noted that adult learners may “be doing it, they just may not be doing it the way the educator [or evaluator] wants them to do it” (p. 1).

On the basis of this study’s findings, when assessing whether behavioral changes resulted in the employees’ enhanced job performance, the employees’ feedback must be solicited. Some of the research participants noted for example, that their general life experiences, general interest in learning and the training program’s shortcomings in providing sufficient practice opportunities, made it difficult for them to assess whether their transfer enhanced their job performance. Clearly, the adult educator must understand whether the employees perceived the learning activity as largely a reinforcement of their knowledge, skills or attitudes, and whether transfer resulted in their enhanced job performance.

When measuring transfer, there should also be a recognition of the fact that the training

program had to be relevant, meeting the learners' and organization's needs, and that the organizational climate was conducive to the employees' learning and transfer efforts. Transfer does not rest solely on the employees' efforts. Employees can not be expected to change their behavior unless they have opportunities to do so (Kirkpatrick, 2001). In assessing transfer, organizational indicators conducive to transfer, such as the organization's openness to learning and risk taking, as well as mentoring and coaching activities should be factored into the transfer assessments. Questions of resource availability, and the managers' support and feedback should also be addressed (Guskey, 2000). Assessing whether the employees succeeded or failed to transfer their learning is too simplistic. The barriers that impeded the employees' transfer, why the training was not applied and whether the employees were supported in their training efforts should be included in an assessment. The assessment can assist the organization in addressing the barriers and facilitators to employees' transfer efforts (Worthen, Sanders & Firtzpatrick, 1997).

The measurement of transfer must further identify what type of transfer is to be assessed. Near transfer for example, in which the training content closely mirrors the work situation or far transfer in which the training content is applied in novel situations must be understood, addressed and assessed. The other types of transfer such as high and low road, vertical, and positive and negative transfer for example, must also be borne in mind and identified for measurement purposes.

Finally, with regard to the length of time that the "knowledge, skills or abilities must be retained to conclude that successful transfer has occurred" (Ford, 1994, p. 30), in light of the speed at which workplaces now change, the measurement issue is likely to be further

compounded. New knowledge and skills are constantly being demanded. The measurement of the employees' retention of their knowledge, skills or attitudes may consequently, be difficult. Further, the measurement of transfer is compounded by the tracking system and human resources required for such an undertaking. With the growing use of technology for training delivery and the anticipated increase in e-learning (Murray, 2000), an estimated 23% of all training by 2000 (Harris-Lalonde, 1999), the measurement of transfer may be even further compounded. Berge (2001) noted for example, that the program evaluation of Web-based systems must include "stakeholder outcomes and instructional development and content, all within a technological infrastructure and political environment" (p. 521). No small feat given that training is only one element of the employees' and organization's increased productivity (Holton, 1996; Lewis, 1996). Technology, the management team, the employees' attitudes, the organizational context, the equipment and physical space, price changes, equipment failures and staff turnover for example, all impact the employees' and organization's performance.

Lewis (1996) also noted the difficulty in measuring the training benefits, especially when those benefits were intrinsic, gradual and long term. Intangible benefits such as the employees' increased commitment to the organization, willingness to learn, share information and work productively in a team, as well as their commitment to lifelong learning, which may be difficult to measure, can none the less be important learning outcomes (Bennett, Lehman & Forst, 1999; Lewis, 1996).

The measurement of employees' transfer efforts is clearly not an easy undertaking due to the many variables at play and may partially explain Broad & Newstrom's (1992) assertion that "up to 80% of the knowledge and skills gained in training ... are not fully applied on the job"

(p. i). Bassi, Benson and Cheney (1996) however, suggested that the measurement of performance should be premised on the degree to which the new skills transfer to the workforce, the individual and group performance improves, and the training contributes to specific business goals. Bassi, et al. added that the quantification and qualification of client relationships, and the number of performance contracts agreed to and met within a year should also form the basis of performance measurement. Broad (1997b) noted that the measurement of the degree of transfer and the return on investment may be best determined by enhanced workplace performance.

Kirkpatrick (2001) posited that evaluators should be satisfied with evidence of transfer, as proof may be impossible to find. Broad (2003) similarly suggested that the least intensive indicators of successful performance that managers find persuasive should be employed, including anecdotal evidence. The impact of the training program on the organization's productivity and ability to meet its customer needs, may thus be more to the point when measuring transfer (Lewis, 1996; Worthen, Sanders & Fitzpatrick, 1997). A more simplified approach to the measurement of transfer such as an increase in the organization's overall productivity and improved client relationships may be means of circumventing many of the aforementioned, problematic measurement issues.

### **Implications of the Findings for Organizations, Employees, and Educational Practices**

*First we shape our structures, and afterwards they shape us. Winston Churchill.*

Workplace learning is increasingly regarded as essential to "a company's [and an employee's] ability to adapt to a rapidly changing environment" (Prokesch, 1997, p. 147). The knowledge-based economy is, in turn, heavily reliant on human resources development and lifelong learning (Betcherman, Lackie & McMullen, 1998). The employees' learning and

transfer efforts are critical to organizations, employees and the knowledge based economy. The next sections of this chapter discuss the implications of the research findings for organizations, employees, and educational policies and practices, followed by a discussion of the areas requiring further study and the limitations of the research. Finally, the chapter concludes with some concluding remarks.

### *Implications of the Findings for Organizations and Employees*

*Most ailing organizations have developed a functional blindness to their own defects. They are not suffering because they cannot resolve their problems but because they cannot see their problems. John Gardner.*

At the outset of this research, I hoped that the findings would contribute to employees, organizations and human resources officials alike in better understanding and facilitating transfer, and in achieving the desired outcomes. I believe that this goal has been reached. The next section of this chapter addresses the implications of the research findings for organizations and employees.

*The organization.*

*Things do not change, we change. Henry David Thoreau.*

Workplace learning is critical to an organization's bottom line (Koehle, 2000). On the basis of this study's findings, CEOs and HRD professionals should be ever vigilant of the fact that the organizational context, of which culture plays an important part, is a very powerful force that facilitates or inhibits employees' transfer efforts. As will be recalled, the participants identified a number of aspects of the culture that both facilitated and inhibited their transfer efforts. Openness, trust and risk taking for example, were associated with facilitating the

participants' transfer efforts, while aspects such as non acceptance of new ideas and a non supportive work environment, were associated with inhibiting their transfer efforts.

Culture, now regarded as crucial to organizational success, is a source of norms, attitudes and values, structuring the way employees think, make decisions and act. It is within the culture that "employees construct their experience and forge their sense of identity" (Usher, 2000, p. 230). Simple, everyday, common occurrences such as facial expressions, words, gestures, attitudes and norms all influence the way employees interpret a situation and the actions that they take. In many respects, the culture or the social organizational relations of power define the possibilities for action, as well as the meaning of the employees' learning (Cervero & Wilson, 1999).

The findings of this research suggested that organizations must take their employees' learning and transfer efforts very seriously, and provide the appropriate support. The organization's well being, financial and otherwise, depends upon it. Organizations must, therefore, ensure that employees not only have the motivation, time and resources to participate in training programs but that the organization itself is open to the employees' application efforts, assists the employees in changing and applying their new behaviors, and provides them with sufficient time to reflect on and change their previous behaviors. Creating an organizational culture that is positive, open, trusting, collegial and respectful, where risk taking and employee empowerment are a natural part of the environment, and where continuous learning and application efforts are supported warrant consideration.

The learning organization principles, which identified the importance of supportive managers and colleagues, mentors, practice opportunities, openness, risk taking, trust, respect

and discourse, wove the facilitative and inhibitive organizational climate characteristics, identified by the participants, into a coherent approach. On the basis of this study's findings, the principles of a learning organization appear to merit serious consideration! Moreover, according to the 1995 National HRD Executive Survey, conducted by the American Society for Training and Development, 94% of the respondents believed that it was important to build a learning organization (Gephart, Marsick, Van Buren, Spiro & Senge, 1996). Organizations may want to heed this call and take the necessary *action*, not just *talk* a good talk.

Managers within an organization play a key role in employees' learning and transfer efforts. Broad (2001) posited that managers "are most powerful" in employees' transfer efforts, throughout all three training program stages (p. 162). Their roles include for example, providing employees with clear performance outputs, the necessary resources and time, reinforcement and rewards for their new behaviors, and feedback and practice opportunities. Managers should also observe, reflect on and improve upon the transfer strategies that they employed with their employees (Broad, 2001).

Managers must not only acknowledge the importance of human resource development but action effective initiatives. Initiatives that will ensure that a learning culture, of which learning and transfer are critical, becomes the norm. On the basis of this study's findings, managers can undertake a number of activities towards this end. Amongst these activities are ensuring that appropriate resources, time and funding, are available for employees' training and transfer activities. Managers might also discuss with their employees prior to a course, what the training program is about, the benefits of the program to the employees' career and personal development, and how the course content might be applied in the employees' work activities and

be of benefit to the organization. During a course, managers can also make themselves available to the learners for questions or feedback on the course content, for example. Following the program, managers can engage in further discussions with the employees concerning the training, application opportunities and possible work assignments, and permit the employees to report back to their colleagues on their learning and transfer experiences.

Without practice opportunities or job assignments following the employees' return to the workplace, the employees' new behaviors are likely to diminish (Kemerer, 1991). By providing practice opportunities or assignments, the employees are able to generate their own solutions to problems which, in turn, help them to become "conscious, creative members of the culture of problem solving" (Brown, Collins & Duguid, 1989, p. 36).

Managers should also practice respect, acknowledge that their employees have a contribution to make, listen to their employees' ideas, and promote continuous learning and application efforts. Managers can encourage their employees' continuous learning and application efforts by supporting their employees' learning efforts and by discussing, facilitating and reinforcing their transfer efforts. Managers might also remove obstacles to their employees' transfer efforts by ensuring that their employees have sufficient time to reflect on their learning, change their behaviors and develop a mentoring or coaching relationship, for example. Bennett, Lehman and Forst (1999) suggested, and I concur, that managers must assess the transfer climate and identify barriers and facilitators to employees' transfer. Managers also need to be held accountable and assessed on whether their behaviors facilitated their employees' learning and transfer efforts.

One organizational strategy that may be particularly useful in facilitating the employees'

transfer efforts is the development of a PLP wherein the employees, in conjunction with their managers, outline their learning goals and objectives, including their personal learning goals, and identify appropriate training programs and projects to be completed upon the employees' return from the training. PLPs help the learners structure their own learning. The learners are consequently, more likely to better understand and have a greater sense of personal commitment to the application of that learning (Knowles, 1980). Finally, managers and senior officials must view their employees' involvement in the decision making, and ability to be self managing and accountable for their actions, as important to the organization's success (Advisory Council on Science and Technology, 1999).

The findings of this research further suggested that adult learners place a particular emphasis on learning from a more wholistic perspective and seek to apply their learning in the different contexts of their lives. Workplace knowledge however, increasingly embodied in economic production and services, is concerned with professional knowledge, problem solving and technical know how. Priority is given to cultural processes, problem solving, competent performance and assessment based on observable outcomes (Garrick & Jakupec, 2000).

Brookfield (2001) posited that labor has become a thing, a commodity exchanged for money. He argued that while adult learning seeks the value of education, such as the learners developing self confidence or new life meanings, organizations and policy makers value the exchange of the labor. Brookfield (2002) suggested, in keeping with the participants' professional, personal and community transfer accounts, that adult education should prepare learners for optimal human development, not maximal production.

Employees are whole human beings with hearts and minds. They are not simply a means

of production nor commodities to be exchanged for money. Employees seek personal growth and to create meaning in their lives, meaning that has relevancy to the different contexts of their lives. One study in fact, revealed that an “organization’s positive attitude to learning and personal growth [affects] employees’ motivation and willingness to innovate and, ultimately, the overall dynamism of the firm” (Advisory Council on Science and Technology, 1999, p. 26). To extend this argument, Lowe (2001) argued that “Canadian society depends on informed and educated citizens who jointly fulfill their own goals while at the same time contributing to social and economic progress” (p. 8). In a similar vein, Brookfield (2002) argued that adult educators should “help learners develop knowledge and skills that will help them understand and change the communities in which they live” (p. 102). While managers may argue that they are not in the business of financially supporting employees’ personal growth efforts, it would appear that the “value of education” is indeed important to an organization’s bottom line and being good corporate citizens, to social and economic progress as well.

Informal learning activities such as interactions and discussions with, and support from managers, peers, colleagues and staff were also important to the participants’ transfer efforts, as were mentoring and coaching programs. It is through participation, interaction and involvement “with a community or culture of learning” that people come “to understand and participate in its history, assumptions and cultural values and rules” (Hansman, 2001, p. 46). Managers must, therefore, take every opportunity to communicate with and support their employees’ transfer efforts, permit their employees to interact and share their learning with their colleagues, and encourage mentoring and coaching activities. Informal learning activities were important to the participants’ overall learning and transfer efforts.

As a bottom line, an organizational climate ought to be established where learning and transfer are a natural part of the everyday work experience (Garrison, 1997; Kemerer, 1991). As the findings of this study suggested, formal and informal learning activities were key to the participants' learning and transfer efforts. A work environment that supports employees in their formal and informal learning appeared to be advantageous. Formal learning activities, in conjunction with informal learning activities, also warrant serious consideration.

Time was raised as a major challenge to the participants' transfer efforts throughout the three training program stages. The issue of time, before the course, related to the participants choosing a shorter course even though their learning needs may not have been met by the shorter course, insufficient practice opportunities during the training due to the shorter courses and insufficient time to reflect on and apply their new or modified behaviors subsequent to the course. Time also related to the insufficient interaction and discussion time with their managers and colleagues, following the course. The allocation of sufficient time for the necessary employee training, to discuss both what the employees will learn and learned, to allow employees to apply their learning and to provide feedback on the employees' application efforts are critical to transfer. Clearly, if the employees' workload is such that they are required to participate in a shorter course that does not address their learning needs, they do not have the time to reflect on and to apply their learning in their work efforts, and their managers and peers are not supportive of their learning and application efforts due to their own time constraints, there are real consequences for workplace learning. Such consequences can impinge on the employees' and organizations' morale and performance, and ultimately on their well-being and competitiveness.

Finally, if an organization is not supportive of the employees' continuous learning efforts,

does not take measures to facilitate employees' transfer efforts, and is not open to employees' new or modified behaviors because the culture is essentially one of sameness, then why bother to train employees? As one of the participants noted during the focus group, some of the course participants did not have much interest in changing their behaviors "because they knew [that] when they [went] back [to the workplace], they [were] going to be put back in their box". The employee's training was not "really supported", it was "just said that it is supported". No application of that employee's learning was expected nor perhaps, even wanted. Organizations must communicate with their employees, at all levels, that continuous learning is important and ensure that action follows the internal communicate - employees' continuous learning and application efforts are necessary to the organization's and employees' well being, and will be supported with the necessary resources, including a supportive organizational climate. One report, in fact, noted that organizations must:

make their commitment to training and skills development well-known to employees, and encourage the active participation of employees in their own skills development. This commitment to both training and to individual employees, in turn, acts as [a] signal to those employees, encouraging them to stay with the firm which then can reap the benefits of their training investments (Advisory Council on Science and Technology, 1999, p. 25).

*The employees.*

*We don't see things as they are, we see them as we are. Anais Nin.*

On the basis of this study's findings, employees must have clarity about their motivations, identify specific learning goals, be aware of their transfer process, and possess an open mind, a positive attitude and an attitude of can do. Being aware of the training program methods that are

most facilitative of their learning and transfer efforts, having a positive view of their work environment, organizationally, managerially and peer wise, and proactively looking for application opportunities, all appeared to facilitate participants' transfer.

Employees must be clear about why a particular course would be beneficial to their professional and personal development. Developing a PLP, in conjunction with their managers, would assist the learners in developing clarity about their learning goals, their course expectations, the support required from their managers and colleagues during all three training program stages (Broad, 2001), how their learning might be applied, and progress made towards achieving their learning goals and objectives. Employees would then, at the outset of the training, begin to make the linkages between the course content and application opportunities. The PLP process might also enhance the employees' awareness of transfer opportunities throughout the three training program stages, including and most particularly, during the training program itself. As will be recalled, many of the participants, during the training program, recollected thinking about the instructor and the course's organization rather than about application opportunities.

Further, employees, during and following a training program, need to *actively* engage in real life practice opportunities, discuss and share experiences with others, solicit feedback, be cognizant of transfer opportunities, and take the time necessary to reflect on and change their attitudes and behaviors. Employees must assume responsibility for applying their new knowledge, skills and/or attitudes to their jobs.

Transfer appeared to be a personal journey that requires employees to proactively seek continuous learning and application opportunities, to reflect on their learning, to engage in

dialogue, to be cognizant of their application contexts, and to take appropriate action. Employees also need to be cognizant of the fact that both formal and informal learning practices are important to their workplace learning and application efforts. Finally, as part of being responsible for their learning and application efforts, employees must work closely with their managers, peers and colleagues, be attuned to their work demands and organizational climate, and regard learning and transfer as a continuous and prominent feature of their lives. Employees at all levels of the organization have a role to play in effecting their own, as well as their colleagues' learning and transfer efforts.

Finally, employees must regard their continuous learning and application efforts as a means of continuing to grow or to evolve themselves, professionally and personally. As some of the participants noted, their ability to change their attitudes and perspectives on issues, and enhance their knowledge and skills base for example, were essential to their learning and transfer efforts. Employees, by identifying the relevance of their learning and proactively seeking application opportunities in the different contexts of their lives - professional, personal and community, can reinforce their learning and transfer efforts, enhance their professional, personal and social growth, and create meaning in all aspects of their lives.

#### *Implications of the Findings for Educational Practices*

*The great end of life is not knowledge but action. Thomas Henry Huxley.*

At the outset of this research, I hoped that by gaining a better appreciation of the what, how, when and why of the employees' application efforts that adult educators might be in a better position to teach for and enhance employees' transfer. I, therefore, hoped that the findings would be of relevance to adult education practices. I believe that these research goals have been

achieved. The following section addresses these matters, as well as some transfer measurement issues that arose from the study.

*Adult education practices.*

*The significant problems we face cannot be solved at the same level of thinking we were at when we created them. Albert Einstein.*

On the basis of this study's findings, it is important that real life practice opportunities, sufficient time for discourse, and assisting the learners in making the linkages between what was learned in the course and its relevancy to their various life contexts, be incorporated into the learning activity. The following section elaborates on these training program aspects.

In developing a training program, the adult educator must ensure that the training content reflects the participants' real life situations and that exercises are developed on the basis of the knowledge, skills or attitudes required in those situations (Brookfield, 1986; Merriam & Caffarella, 1999; Mezirow, 1997a). The only way that adult learners can act in a meaningful manner is when they can practice "real responses and real activities, in real settings" (Taylor & Blunt, 2001, p. 99). Incorporating the "learners' developmental needs, ideas and cultural context into the learning experience is important" (Hansman, 2001, p. 44). An adult educator must, therefore, consider the context of the learner and incorporate "real life issues and concerns", relevant to the learners' application contexts, into the learning activity (Brookfield, 1986, p. 251).

The practical application of the learning and a problem centered curriculum should also be emphasized. By addressing real work related problems, learners come to see their learning as meaningful and relevant to their application contexts (Candy, 1991; Lave, 1997; Merriam & Caffarella, 1999). They also come to understand the "local character of [the] knowledge"

(Kirschner & Whitson, 1997, p. 12) and “gain access to the standpoint that enables [them] to act meaningfully and purposefully” in their communities of practice (Brown, Collins & Duguid, 1989, p. 36). Further, by the adult educator facilitating the learners in making the linkages between the course content, and its relevance to and application in their work activities, the employees’ transfer efforts are enhanced (MacDonald, Gabriel & Cousins, 2000). On the basis of this research’s findings, the latter point was a very important aspect of the when of the participants’ transfer efforts. As will be recalled, many of the participants did not even recollect thinking about application opportunities during the training program but rather focused on the instructor and the course’s organization and content. Practice opportunity methods, problem centered curriculum, group deliberations and case studies need to be incorporated into a training program to facilitate employees’ learning and transfer (Knowles, 1980).

While it is important to incorporate a strong work related component into a training program (Lave, 1997), it is equally important to incorporate the learners’ “real life issues and concerns”, in the different contexts of their lives (Brookfield, 1986, p. 251). As will be recalled, the participants emphasized the need to address issues that were relevant to their professional, personal and community lives. A training program must, therefore, address the needs of the whole person (Steel, 2001). Human resources development however, has come to be viewed as “a workplace pedagogy in service of [the] CEOs” with training oriented towards consensus formation around the CEOs’ agendas (Collins, 1995, p. 87). Education and training policies, and workplace knowledge are increasingly dedicated to pre-specified industry standards, based on the demands of global competition (Garrick, 1998; Usher, 2000).

Adult education has become “a struggle for meaning and a struggle over power relations”

(Cervero & Wilson, 1999, p. 37), requiring the adult educator to serve two masters “that of the system and that of the lifeworld” (Welton, 1995, p. 131). Usher (2000) however, argued that professional competence must not be made at the expense of social purpose. The importance of adult education for social participation and social responsibility must be emphasized (Jackson & Jordan, 2001; Jansen & Wildemeersch, 1998). “At stake are not learning processes on how to act as an “entrepreneur of the self” in an “enterprised culture”, but how to take “care of the self” and “make a difference” to the quality of social life, in a world of “culturalized practices”” (Jansen, et al., p. 226).

While it is important to produce job specific knowledge in a training program, it is equally important to produce new ways of thinking and doing (The Conference Board of Canada, 1999). As many of the participants noted, their ability to change their perspectives, evolve themselves as learners, enhance their knowledge and skills, and apply their learning in the different contexts of their lives were important to their learning and transfer efforts. On the basis of this study’s findings, adult educators would do adult learners a great service if they ensured that the learners were prepared to make a contribution to their communities, organizational and otherwise. Adult learners, in learning beyond their professional knowledge requirements, would come to understand their responsibility in making contributions to their communities.

Contributions which make their communities better places in which to live thereby, creating places and spaces that are more humane, addressing the conditions of the mind, heart and soul.

Discourse was also identified as essential to the participants’ transfer. Discourse is an important social process in the meaning making of the learners’ experiences. Through the sharing of different perspectives and experiences, critiquing new ideas and receiving feedback on

their ideas and application efforts, the participants were able to test and confirm their new perspectives. Through discourse, learners validate what and how they understand, gain broader and alternate perspectives, and develop insights that might not have occurred otherwise (Hansman, 2001; Mezirow, 1997a). Mezirow (1994), in fact, posited that “adult development means the progressive realization of an adult’s capacity to fully and freely participate in rational dialogue, to achieve a broader, more discriminating, permeable and integrative understanding of his/her experiences as a guide to action” (p. 226). Through discourse “ideas are exchanged and modified and belief systems developed and appropriated” (Brown, Collins & Duguid, 1989, p. 40). Adult educators need to ensure that sufficient time is allocated to discourse, assist the learners in becoming more adept at learning from and helping others learn, and foster peer collaboration (Brookfield, 1985; Mezirow, 1997a).

Adult educators also need to be mindful of the interrelationships between the learner, training program and organizational climate. The findings of this research suggested that transfer is a very complex process, equally dependent on the three transfer sources. The most outstanding training programs, without the learners’ desire and intent to apply their learning, and without a culture that is open and supportive of employees’ transfer efforts for example, will impede employees’ transfer. Adult educators must endeavour to become familiar with the organizational context - the transfer environment - and work with the learners and managers in identifying the program’s goals and objectives, potential real life situations and organizational impediments to the participants’ transfer efforts. Adult educators should further assist managers in understanding how to facilitate the employees’ transfer efforts, the principles of coaching and the learning organization, the importance of and facilitating the development of PLPs, and how to become an

effective mentor. Adult educators also need to discuss the importance of informal learning practices with managers and employees, as workplace knowledge is further acquired through front line experience with clients, peers and mentors (Steel, 2001). Finally, the adult educator, during the training program should include a discussion of the possible impediments to transfer such as the workload, time, bureaucracy, colleagues' unwillingness to accept new ideas and the learners themselves.

As the study findings suggested, the participants' motivations, attitudes, skills and course expectations were quite varied, and they all influenced the participants' transfer efforts. It is extremely important, therefore, that adult educators understand a number of the learners' characteristics. Among these characteristics are the individual learners' motivations, learning needs, course expectations, attitudes, skills, previous learning experiences, and whether the course was the participants' choice. The adult learners' intention to learn must be understood as adults typically learn when they have the intent to learn (Knowles, 1989; Tough, 2002). As a means of facilitating the employees' transfer efforts, the adult educator should attempt to understand either before the course's development or at the commencement of the course, depending on how the organization undertakes its course development, the learners' learning goals and course expectations for example, and address them during the course.

Providing varied training methods and enquiring into the employees' preferred methods of instruction are important. As the findings indicated however, even though varied methods were employed during the courses, the participants' transfer efforts appeared to be enhanced when the participants' preferred instructional methods were included. Providing "a diversity of methods ... to meet the multiplicity of purposes that will arise" in teaching adults, did not appear

to be sufficient in facilitating the participants' transfer of learning (Brookfield, 1986, p. 258).

Rather, the participants' transfer efforts were facilitated when their preferred training methods formed part of the course. Adult educators should, therefore, endeavour to understand the participants' preferred methods and attempt to include them in the delivery of the course.

Clearly, real life practice opportunities, linking the course content to possible application opportunities in the learners' different life contexts and discourse, need to be among the training methods employed.

No single approach to learning meets all employees' needs either in a training program nor the workplace. Some employees for example, prefer informal learning methods to formal, preferring to learn through on the job training or mentoring activities, for example. While the "classroom is not a thing of the past" (Hansen, 2001, p. 37), many employees are choosing to participate in e-learning, the new training paradigm (Khan, 2001). According to the Advisory Committee for Online Learning (2001) "institutions must provide online learning opportunities or risk being left behind competitively" (p. 2). E-learning is however, believed to be most effective when it is used in conjunction with workshops and correspondence courses (Hansen, 2001).

Similar to the development of a formal training program, e-learning courses must be developed with an understanding of the business objectives, the financial resources and the technical limitations, the knowledge must be of value, and the participants must have the collaboration of the other course participants (Driscoll, 1998; Gray, 1999; Hansen, 2001; The Advisory Committee for Online Learning, 2001). E-learning must also offer an engaging and meaningful curricular, and a learner-centered environment (Russell, 1999). Organizations should

ensure that different learning approaches are available to their employees. While the development of an e-learning course has similar course development activities as a formal course, it is not clear if the findings of this research are relevant to an e-learning context.

Teaching for transfer is critical. While a strong work related component is important to employees' transfer efforts, preparing course materials that closely mirror the participants' work activities may be short cited. Aside from the need to address the whole person and prepare learners for social purpose (Brookfield, 2002; Usher, 2000), work situations are increasingly requiring learners to adapt their learning to novel work situations (Bassi, Benson & Cheney, 1996; Ford & Weissbein, 1997). Focusing on work related problems which closely mirror the participants' work activities may in fact, limit their application efforts. Adult educators may need to strike a balance between teaching for near transfer, in which the work related problems closely mirror the learners' work activities, and far transfer in which the learners must adapt their learning to novel work situations. Bearing in mind the increased demand for shorter courses, one means of striking the balance is to facilitate the learners' understanding of possible application opportunities in varied work situations and contexts.

Jackson and Jordan (2001) posited that knowledge of soft skills and competencies such as communications and problem solving, should form a basic part of any training program as they are increasingly important to the knowledge based economy. The findings of this study are certainly in keeping with these views as the communications and interpersonal skills were frequently cited as examples of the research participants' transfer efforts. While these competencies are important to the workplace, they are equally important to a productive life.

A meeting between the adult educator, the managers and the participants prior to a course

to identify the training program's goals and objectives for example, was suggested as a facilitative transfer strategy (e.g., Broad & Newstrom, 1992; Taylor, 2000). However, many courses are not developed in that manner. Rather, they are based on organizational needs assessments which are typically top down, through discussions with managers alone or through best efforts. Adult educators should however, endeavour to solicit as much information as possible about the participants and the organization's context. Broad and Newstrom (1992), Caffarella (1994) and Taylor (2000) provide useful references for adult educators in designing and developing training programs that are conducive to transfer. These references all address the transfer partners' responsibilities - the employees, trainers and managers - for all three training program stages.

Moreover, if courses continue to be condensed due to time constraints, adult educators will need to ensure that the programs are targeted and impactful. Sufficient opportunities for discussion and real life practice opportunities however, should not be compromised. When courses are condensed, perhaps a greater emphasis should be placed on follow-up initiatives such as ongoing coaching and mentoring initiatives, and periodic, targeted follow-up sessions. As this research suggested, if learners do not have sufficient real life practice opportunities, discussion time or follow-up activities, it is easy for them to forget the information or they are reluctant to apply their learning, upon their return to the workplace.

Finally, the adult educator is extremely important to the learners' learning and application efforts from the organization of the course, to the relevancy of its content and delivery, to facilitating discussions and providing feedback, to follow-up. As will be recalled, the research participants' recollections of the training program related to the instructor's likeability, the

course's delivery, and the course's organization and content. The instructor was key in the participants' overall perceptions of the training program. Adult educators must remain vigilant of their position, and its effect on the learners' learning and application efforts.

### **Areas Requiring Further Study**

The majority of the participants transferred their learning to their work activities. Many of the participants, as a result of the prescreening interview, consciously and actively sought to transfer that learning. The participants' transfer experiences may not, therefore, be representative of employees' transfer efforts in general. In an effort to further substantiate or refute the evidence suggested in this study, a similar phenomenological study might focus on employees who do not transfer their learning or who's transfer experiences are not as positive as the participants' in this study. Due to the political and bureaucratic demands of the federal government department examined in this research, a similar qualitative study in a different organization, public or private sector, should be considered to assess if the findings of this study are relevant to other populations.

A quantitative study might compare whether participants who participate in longer training programs do have different and enhanced transfer experiences or, whether certain variables are more impactful on employees' transfer, regardless of the length of the course. Does for example, the learners': a) awareness of transfer opportunities throughout the three training program stages - before, during and after, b) seeking, proactively, to apply their learning efforts, c) sense of empowerment in their decision making, and d) position in an organization influence their application efforts? Similarly, is there a correlation between the adult educator teaching for transfer and the learners' enhanced transfer, or the adult educator addressing the different

contexts of the learners' lives and enhanced transfer?

A qualitative study, on the other hand, might attempt to understand whether one of the primary transfer sources is more important to employees' transfer efforts and under what circumstances. Another qualitative study might attempt to understand whether formal and informal learning practices are required to facilitate the employees' transfer efforts, or whether formal or informal learning activities are more conducive to the employees' application efforts. For example, is formal training in conjunction with informal learning practices or a community of practice more conducive to the employees' learning and application efforts? Similarly, a qualitative study, not related to communications, managerial or leadership type training, should be undertaken to understand if learners generally do proactively seek to transfer their learning to the different contexts of their lives. Such a study may be very helpful to organizations in their decision to sponsor and support courses that are not directly related to the employees' job activities. In fact, a qualitative study might examine the transfer experiences of employees who participated in organizationally supported personal development courses. Those employees' perceptions and experiences could add greater strength to the argument that employees' personal development efforts are important to an organization's performance.

A qualitative study might examine whether other adult learning theories such as the critical theory learning, more comprehensively address employees' transfer efforts. Alternatively, a qualitative study might examine if the self directed learning theory best addresses the learners' characteristics, the transformational theory the training program and the situated cognition theory the organizational climate. If not, under what circumstances? A qualitative study might also seek to address the questions that were raised concerning the situated cognition

theory. For example, how are new ideas or practices accepted by or integrated into the community of practice, and how are learners who proactively seek to apply their learning received by members of their community? Another study might examine whether e-learning course participants have similar transfer experiences as those of the research participants, and whether a learning organization, in comparison to the situated cognition theory, more comprehensively addresses employees' organizational climate experiences? Finally, a qualitative study might seek to further understand the interrelationships between the three primary transfer sources.

### **Limitations of the Research**

The phenomenological research approach is premised on the individuals' ability to recollect their experiences. As a consequence, the participants' transfer accounts may not represent full accounts of their transfer experiences but rather what they were able to recollect, select and discuss at the time of the data collection (Kvale, 1996; Yin, 1994). Further, the research participants were employed in a large, federal government organization known for the professionalism of its staff and management team, as well as its innovative work practices. While these organizational characteristics are necessary in today's workplaces, the organization may not be representative of other work environments. As a consequence, the learners in this research may have had learning and transfer experiences that were not representative of other public and private sector employees.

As a result of the pre-screening process employed in this study to identify potential participants, the research participants likely had more positive transfer accounts. The findings may, therefore, not be representative of adult learners' transfer experiences in general. For

example, some adults do not learn well in a formal learning environment. A structured learning environment may actually impede the learners' learning and transfer efforts, resulting in less positive transfer accounts. Further, three of the seven interview participants were managers and one of the administrative officers had supervisory responsibilities. Three of the five focus group participants were managers and the administrative officer who attended also had supervisory responsibilities. There may, consequently, have been a managerial bias in the findings. As noted earlier, a manager's position in an organization may be a factor that facilitates their transfer efforts (Ottoson, 1995b). The findings may not, therefore, be representative of employees' general transfer experiences.

The departmental in-house training programs were two to five days in length. The Communications and POMP courses, being two and three days in length respectively, may have been too short to permit the participants to sufficiently acquire and practice the new knowledge, skills and attitudes, and to interact and discuss situations with the other course participants. While there is increasing pressure to reduce the length of training programs, the research participants noted that the longer training programs provided more practice and discussion opportunities, resulting in a greater level of comfort when transferring their learning to their work activities. Due to the length of the courses in this research, the findings may not be representative of other training or transfer situations.

This research also addressed the issue of adaptability, far and high road transfer. The participants' application efforts required them for example, to reflect on their learning, and to consciously make the linkages between the training program's content and its application in the various contexts of their lives. While adaptability is indeed a desired employee characteristic, the

findings of this study may not be relevant to situations which require the transfer of simple skills or skills which require the learners' direct application of their learning, such as local area network support training.

The whether and why of the participants' transfer efforts were based on self reports. A formal program evaluation was not conducted nor was there a follow-up with the employees' managers to confirm the participants' self reported transfer successes. Follow-up with the participants' managers was believed to be problematic as some of the participants may have been unwilling to participate in the research as a result of such a request and their managers may have simply been unwilling to participate in the research. Self reports are however, a commonly held practice in assessing transfer, with the participants being sensitive and accurate assessors of their transfer efforts (Garavaglia, 1993; Guskey, 2000; Kirkpatrick, 1987). Further, the research participants were identified as being primarily informational, self directed, transformational or situation cognition learners on the basis of the learner characteristics that they displayed. For example, the participants were considered as transformational learners if they demonstrated characteristics such as actively seeking, through rational thought and reflection, to revise their assumptions, to make a shift in their perspectives and to change their behaviors or perceptions by correcting distortions in their beliefs, values or attitudes. As a result of the process employed, the depiction of the participants' learning process may not have been accurate, thus affecting the interpretation of the data and the discussions. To illustrate, the informational learning process was associated with the participants who did not transfer or transferred very little of their learning.

Finally, as a result of my working in the organization, I was not an "arm's length"

interviewer. My objectivity may have been compromised as the participants and I all shared a history with the organization. I could relate to their transfer experiences and perceptions, as I too had participated in similar in-house training programs over the years and understood the organization. I believe however, that my history with the organization established trust with all of the participants at the outset of the research. I was one of them and like them, sought to better understand our transfer experiences and perhaps ultimately, enhance workplace learning for departmental employees and managers alike. I believe however, that by being a member of the organization, a trusting relationship was established and that this relationship facilitated the interview process, enhanced the data collection and interpretation processes, and thus strengthened the quality of the research. One could argue however, that my interest in the subject, my being the research instrument and my being an employee in the federal government department in question, knowing some of the participants somewhat, was a limitation of the research. The research design, with the audiotaped interviews and focus group session, as well as the interview and focus group narratives which were subject to the participants' challenge, refinement and further commentary, attempted to ensure that the data were representative of the participants' realities, not the researcher's.

### **Concluding Remarks**

This study advanced our understanding of transfer from the perspective of employees who had "lived" the transfer experience. The analysis of those experiences resulted in the identification of eight main themes. Two of those themes related to the individuals' characteristics, four to the training program and two to the organizational climate. Further, transfer was found to be a very complex and intricate process that required a proactive, personal

journey. A journey that was dependent on the interplay between the learner, training program and organizational climate, and the numerous variables within and between those three transfer sources. No one transfer source however, was more conducive to the participants' transfer efforts. In fact, all three sources appeared to be equally important.

The transfer research and adult learning theories were similar in their treatment of the participants' experiences. By situating transfer within the three adult learning theories however, a different and valuable perspective on transfer was gained. A perspective which brought a broader and more comprehensive understanding to many of the participants' experiences, and integrated the quantitative research findings into a more coherent body of knowledge. The theories also illuminated the interplay between the three transfer sources. The adult education principles and practices appeared to be well positioned to enhance the employees' transfer efforts.

From my perspective, the transfer of learning is about meaning making, taking action and making a difference in our lives - professional, personal and community. I believe that transfer is a proactive, complex, intricate and personal journey. A journey that is fundamental to individual and organizational performance. Today's workplaces require that learners effectively apply their learning. In so doing, the learners enhance their own and the organization's performance.

In many respects, transfer is not a big mystery. It appears to be an everyday phenomenon. In spite of the complexity of the transfer process, transfer does transpire. Our desire to address and resolve problems or situations, in the various contexts of our lives, may be a key factor in our transfer successes (Knowles, 1980; Tough, 2002). In essence, transfer gets to the bottom of who we are as individuals, who we seek to become and the world that we would like to create both for

ourselves and others. Transfer is a natural human phenomenon, one on which our very existence depends. The individuals' ability to apply their knowledge, skills or attitudes from one context to another is, in my opinion, fundamental to personal, organizational, social and economic well-being. "As never before, access to ongoing learning [and application] opportunities [are] crucial for a high quality of life, economic innovation, and vibrant communities" (Lowe, 2001, p. 2). Lifelong learning and the application of that learning is the foundation of a "civil and prosperous society" (p. 7).

In conclusion, I would like to leave the reader with a thought to ponder. A thought which I believe captures the essence of the participants' lived accounts of their transfer experiences. A thought which describes the simplicity and yet the complexity of the transfer process. *Learning is finding out what [we] already know. Doing is demonstrating that [we] know it. Teaching is reminding others that they know it as well as [us]. [We] are all learners, doers, teachers.*

*Richard Bach.*

Let us be mindful of Bach's words in our own learning, interactions and actions as we embark on our lifelong learning and application efforts, and on making a difference in our professional, personal and social lives!!!

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## Appendix A The Recruitment Script

Good morning/afternoon. Introduce myself, ... I received your name from ... and understand that you were agreeable to me following up with you concerning your possible participation in my thesis research. I am undertaking my PhD in educational psychology and I am very interested in better understanding workplace learning. Specifically, how employees transfer their learning or apply their learning from a training program to their workplace. Your participation and experiences in the course, will help me in my endeavour and may help you as well in better understanding your workplace learning efforts. I would like to ask you a few short questions regarding the course. 1. Did you find the training program useful?, 2. Have you applied anything that you learned in the program to your workplace tasks?, and 3. Can you provide me with an example of something that you learned in the training program that you have applied in your workplace?

In the case of transfer - I am very pleased to hear that you had such a positive training experience and would very much appreciate your participation in my research. The research will involve a 1-1 1/2 hour interview, followed at a later time, by a 30 minute interview wherein I will solicit your feedback on my interpretation of your transfer experience and finally, a 1 hour focus group session with the other research participants. The interview process will commence in March and conclude with the focus group in May or June 2001. Would you be willing to participate in the research? If yes, discuss possible times and places for the initial interview. Also inform the participants that their participation is entirely voluntary, they can withdraw from the study at any point in time without any consequences, and the information provided will remain confidential. Also inform the participants that a formal letter of invitation will be provided at the time of the interview.

In the case of no transfer - I may accept two employees who express no transfer as their experience may compliment and reveal important information about employees' transfer experiences. In the case of not accepting the prospective participants for the research - I am sorry to hear that you did not find the course useful to your workplace activities. As my research is focused on the transfer or application of what employees learned during the course and applied in their workplace activities, your course experiences would not address the research questions. I truly appreciate your consideration of my research and your willingness to participate. I would like to take this opportunity to thank you very much for your time and willingness, and wish you every success in your endeavours.

## Appendix B

### A Brief Summary of the In-House Training Programs' Course Outline

#### 1. The Power of Communication

The course was intended to maximize the power of interpersonal communications. It provided participants with an opportunity to identify their personal communications style and to develop and practice effective communication skills, including their sending and receiving skills. Through theory, exercises on topics such as communications, negotiations, empathy and feedback, role plays and personal assignment worksheets, participants learned how to “really” listen, to identify obstacles to effective communication, and to develop strategies for confident, assertive communication.

Other topics covered included elements of successful communications, understanding the communications process, verbal and nonverbal factors; understanding conflict; negotiating win-win situations; managing internal dialogue, tension and anxiety; providing constructive feedback; and understanding empathy.

Target audience: All employees

Duration: 2 days

Dates: June 20 and October 27, 2000

#### 2. People-Oriented Management Program

The course was intended to sensitize participants to crucial people-centered elements of today's work environment and provide them with tools for success. The awareness and skills developed over the course included helping participants understand their leadership patterns, appreciate different preferences and approaches among team members, and gain a clear working knowledge of the factors influencing communication. It also included improving listening skills and the ability to convey clear messages, recognizing causes of communications breakdown, understanding the Myers Briggs and individual preferences, experiencing the personal and situational factors that affect the outcome of feedback, coaching for results, applying what was learned, and solving organizational and interpersonal problems. Theory, exercises on communications, feedback, leadership, management and coaching, case studies, role plays and videos were employed.

Target audience: Managers, supervisors and staff

Duration: 3 days

Date: September 18, 2000

#### 3. Leadership Training Program

The course was intended to prepare employees who were interested in pursuing a career

in the executive ranks by improving their leadership competencies. It consisted of 5 days of leadership skills and 5 days of the machinery of government. The leadership skills part sought to develop an awareness of personal leadership (i.e., self awareness and communication); interpersonal leadership (i.e., leading others and conflict resolution); team leadership (i.e., team dynamics and facilitation) and integration (i.e., interviews and celebrating success). Theory, a communications model, feedback, videos and an executive mock interview were employed.

The Machinery of Government part sought to develop the participants' understanding of the global context, political infrastructure, bureaucracy, governance, budget cycle, financial administration, and leadership principles and practices. An issue paper concerning Canada's productivity challenge was discussed and a strategy was developed.

Target audience: EX-1 minus one level employees

Duration: 10 days

Dates: Leadership - December 4, 2000

Governance - January 8, 2001

**Appendix C**  
**The Research Interview Questions**  
**by the What, How, When and Why Subquestions**

**Pre Interview Questions**

- a) Where do you work?
2. What is your position title? What is your job group (CO, AS, ES)?
3. How long have you been in your current position?

**The What Questions**

1. Have you applied anything that you learned in the course in your work activities? Can you provide me with examples?
2. What particular attitudes or skills do you believe are necessary for you to apply what you learn in courses to your work tasks? Can you describe these for me?
3. What part of the course was most useful to you applying what you learned [case studies, working in teams, work related problem solving exercises, good instructor, media]? In your training program experiences, what training methods are most useful to your learning and transferring that learning to your work activities?
4. Can you briefly describe your work unit and the work environment factors that you feel facilitated your application? Were there any work environment factors that inhibited your application or prevented you from applying more of what you learned in the course?
5. Can you describe for me the type of support that you received from your manager, if any, before, during and after the course?
6. The next time you take a course, what if anything, would you do differently to apply more of what you learn to your workplace efforts [personal, related to a course and/or your work unit]?
7. What do you think needs to change, if anything, in the department to facilitate application of employees' learning efforts?
8. In your training program experiences, what are the main challenges that you have faced in applying what you have learned to your work activities?

**The How Questions**

1. Can you describe the steps of how you took what you learned during the course and applied it to your workplace activities [referred to the course material, dialogued, reflected on how/where/when to apply, received coaching]?
2. Are there other things that you do or see differently in your work life as a result of the course? Can you describe these for me? Are there things that you do or see differently in your family role or as a volunteer in your community, for example, as a result of the course? Can you describe these for me?
3. When you look back at the course, yourself as a learner and your work environment, how would you describe the interplay between these three factors on your application efforts?

**The When Questions**

1. Before you decided to register for the course, what were some of your thoughts [is it worthwhile, will I get my managers approval, I do not want to go]? What were your expectations of the program and were those expectations met?
2. Recall for me what your thoughts were during the course [content/instructor/materials]? What were some of your thoughts when you returned to the workplace following the course [will need to be careful how I go about applying, peers, manager]?
3. Looking back, were you aware of when you started to think about transferring your learning from the course context to your workplace activities? When exactly did that happen [e.g., during the course, in your reflections, during work]. Were there other points in time that you were conscious of transferring the course content to your work activities? Can you describe these for me?

**The Why Questions**

1. Why did you decide to participate in the course?
2. In your opinion, has the application of what you learned during the course enhanced your on-the-job performance? Why do you say so?

## Appendix D The Sequencing of the Interview Questions

### Pre Interview Questions

- a) Where do you work?
- b) What is your position title? What is your job group (CO, AS, ES)?
- c) How long have you been in your current position?

### The Interview Questions

1. Why did you decide to participate in the course?
2. Before you decided to register for the course, what were some of your thoughts [is it worthwhile, will I get my managers approval, I do not want to go]? What were your expectations of the program and were those expectations met?
3. Recall for me what your thoughts were during the course [content/instructor/materials]? What were some of your thoughts when you returned to the workplace following the course [will need to be careful how I go about applying, peers, manager]?
4. Have you applied anything that you learned in the course in your work activities? Can you provide me with examples?
5. Can you describe the steps of how you took what you learned during the course and applied it to your workplace activities [referred to the course material, dialogued, reflected on how/where/when to apply, received coaching]?
6. Looking back, were you aware of when you started to think about transferring your learning from the course context to your workplace activities? When exactly did that happen [e.g., during the course, in your reflections, during work]. Were there other points in time that you were conscious of transferring the course content to your work activities? Can you describe these for me? What exactly were you thinking at those times?
7. In your opinion, has the application of what you learned during the course enhanced your on-the-job performance? Why do you say so?
8. Are there other things that you do or see differently in your work life as a result of the course? Can you describe these for me? Are there things that you do or see differently in your family role or as a volunteer in your community, for example, as a result of the course? Can you describe these for me?

9. What particular attitudes or skills do you believe are necessary for you to apply what you learn in courses to your work tasks? Can you describe these for me?
10. What part of the course was most useful to you applying what you learned [case studies, working in teams, work related problem solving exercises, good instructor, media]? In your training program experiences, what training methods are most useful to your learning and transferring that learning to your work activities?
11. Can you briefly describe your work unit and the work environment factors that you feel facilitated your application? Were there any work environment factors that inhibited your application or prevented you from applying more of what you learned in the course?
12. Can you describe for me the type of support that you received from your manager, if any, before, during and after the course?
13. The next time you take a course, what if anything, would you do differently to apply more of what you learn to your workplace efforts [personal, related to a course and/or your work unit]?
14. When you look back at the course, yourself as a learner and your work environment, how would you describe the interplay between these three factors on your application?
15. What do you think needs to change, if anything, in the department to facilitate application of employees' learning efforts?
16. In your training program experiences, what are the main challenges that you have faced in applying what you have learned to your work activities?

\_\_\_\_\_  
Participant's signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Researcher's signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

I am interested in receiving a copy of the summary report upon completion of the study.

Yes       No

## Appendix G The Seven Interview Narratives

### 1. My Interpretation of John's Transfer of Learning Experiences and Perceptions

*Why you decided to participate in the Power of Communication training program and why you believe that transfer occurred.*

You decided to participate in this training program because you believe that while effective communications is essential to work life and life in general, it is complicated. An individual's emotions, background and ways of perceiving things must be taken into account. Further, it is necessary to have an ability to read another person's body language, to think outside of your own experiences and to not assume what someone is trying to communicate. Your work requires that you listen to people very carefully and you recognized that sometimes you are tempted to jump to conclusions and make suggestions to people, particularly when things are really hectic at work. You felt the training program would help you address these matters and enhance your communications. The course did help you and provided you with another tool in your "bag of tricks". You now spend more time listening, reading the body language, considering the other person's perspective and capturing more quickly the intent of their message. You also do not jump to conclusions as readily. You recognize the importance of seeing where other people are coming from and you seek clarification or confirm what the other person is communicating.

From your perspective, the application of what you learned in the course has enhanced your on-the-job performance minimally due to the lack of opportunity during the course to develop confidence in applying what you were taught. This lack of opportunity reduced your application in your workplace efforts.

Your expectations of the program were met to a certain extent. Due to the length of the course, you knew that you would be able to pick up a few tips to help you improve your communications - receiving and sending. You would have preferred however, to have a more in-depth course with more opportunities to practice and receive feedback, to change or modify some of your behaviors, and to develop new skills.

*When transfer entered your learning experience.*

Before the course, you thought about whether: you were taking the right course, you were going to get what you needed, and there would be enough time in two days for you to practice what you learned. As time away from the job was an issue, you decided that the two day course would be appropriate.

During the course, you thought about how you were going to apply the course material. Throughout the years, you have settled into a certain way of doing things and ways of looking at the world. The training program, provided you with different ways of doing and seeing things but you were left questioning, how were you really going to apply the information? From your perspective, to see life from a different perspective takes training and time to adjust your thinking patterns - a longer period of time is required to do that.

Upon your return to the office, you recall thinking that the opportunity to apply what you learned didn't present itself immediately. You did try to do little things differently but you were not always comfortable applying the training because of the lack of time available during the course to practice your new skills, knowledge or attitude. You felt the lack of opportunity inhibited your application. You were aware of transferring the course material to your workplace during the training program itself and as situations arose upon your return to work. You were also conscious of transferring your learning to your home life a couple of days after the training (e.g., in discussions with your daughter).

***The How and What of your transfer of learning experience.***

Transfer of your learning occurred when you encountered certain situations in both your work and home life, and reflected back on the course material and the course discussions. You were conscious of how you were going to and how you tried to apply the new information or skill. The training made you reflect more on your actions and information relating to how to communicate more effectively was readily available in your mind - no longer in the recesses of your mind.

The course reaffirmed and brought to the front of your thinking what you had known for a long while. It also provided you with some new ideas concerning the what and how of communications, changed your perspective (e.g., regarding your daughter - you both have the right to your own understanding, now let's talk about it and come to some kind of agreement), and you now try to listen, understand and appreciate other people's perspectives.

You employ different transfer strategies when you participate in internet training and attend a conference. You described internet training, particularly information technology, as requiring immediate application to your job and that it be relevant to your work (e.g., trying a new computer program) for transfer to happen. If you do not use the course information right away, you won't remember it as well. If it is not applied immediately, you tend to forget it and end up asking someone to help you out because going back to the manual is too time consuming. You described internet training as the how of training (e.g., to conduct a search).

You described conference attendance as the what of training (e.g., the big picture, broadening your knowledge). You noted that application may not be immediate (e.g., you form an understanding of an issue and maybe apply it months later when you factor it into your analysis) and suggested that one has a greater risk of forgetting some of the material. Taking notes and referring back to them are important transfer strategies for you.

You described formal training as somewhere in between - the how and the what - wherein an individual develops a level of comfort with both the subject matter and their new skills.

From your perspective, employees' attitudes and skills that facilitate transfer are open mindedness, an attitude of actually looking for application opportunities, and an ability during the training to listen and see how the course material might apply to your work activities. Flexibility, adaptability, a propensity for innovation and an ability to understand different perspectives are also important transfer factors.

The training methods that you found most useful to you applying what you learned in the Power of Communications training program were the theory, the exercises where you had to identify a scenario and think about how you would communicate with someone, sharing

experiences with others (e.g., hearing about other participants' situations, how they resolved them and relating their experiences to your own situation) and receiving feedback.

Generally speaking, you find the following training methods useful to your transfer efforts: participative training methods which help you to understand, to apply and to receive feedback from the trainer and participants, videotaping, roleplaying, and looking at real life situations (e.g., situations where you would like to see change in yourself or your work situation, and discuss and receive ideas from others).

The next time that you take a course, to apply more of what you learn, you would like to look at some real life situations and engage in discussions with people in the group. You would also like to participate in more role playing and get a level of comfort/confidence with new skills and knowledge before returning to the workplace.

You received the following support from your manager:

*before the training program* your manager had a discussion with you concerning your strengths and weaknesses, and suggested that a communications course might be useful to you. He approved the course without hesitation.

*after the training program* you had no discussion about the training and suggested that maybe your manager didn't remember that you were away as the training was only two days.

Managerial support was not sought nor offered at that point in time.

From your perspective, the interplay between the training program, the individual learner's characteristics and the work environment on application, is one of a training program's usefulness to: a) your work, b) you personally and c) your organization. You believe that when you learn something, you feel better about yourself and apply it to your work and life in general, and are a more effective employee in the organization. At the moment, you do not see this interplay at the organizational level due to HRB developing the training with little management input or employees' needs assessments (e.g., no organizational approach to corporate training). There is also a disconnect between what management says it needs and commits to. The personal learning plans may help in identifying the required corporate training. Management involvement in and commitment to the employees' training efforts will create a different learning attitude - learning will be seen to be valued and useful to the organization. The interplay then, is one of the organization identifying training needs, putting support mechanisms in place, changing attitudes and assisting employees in their learning efforts. These efforts in turn will help the organization and employees in their workplace efforts.

You portrayed your work environment as one where good ideas are not well received (e.g., they have to come from the management team), it is difficult to experiment and mistakes are not forgiven. There are also many different clients who have varying constraints, desires and expectations. These situations inhibit employees' learning and transfer efforts. Employees must therefore, be flexible, listen well, seek to understand why certain actions are taken, be willing to change their projects or ways of doing things to get their work done, and slowly move the goal post. In your opinion, no particular work environment factors really inhibited the application of what you learned in the communications course.

In your experiences, a work environment that facilitates learning and transfer, is one where innovations are well received and mistakes forgiven. To enhance application, you believe that an organization's culture is critical. In a hierarchical environment, transfer can be difficult as people at certain levels think that only ideas from their counterparts are worthwhile pursuing.

Very often, management won't give employees the time to express new ideas or doesn't listen any to new suggestions. If an organizational culture is not ready to hear a different message, application is impeded. A culture must be: a) open minded, b) ready to listen, to take risks and to apply new things, and c) one where management always questions how to make employees more effective in their work and assists them in their learning and transfer efforts. In your opinion, the culture is the most important factor in facilitating transfer.

Time is also an important transfer issue. From your perspective, it is often easier and more expedient for both the employees and the organization to do things the same old way than to apply something new. Further, an individual may be quite comfortable and feel less vulnerable to criticism with the expected outcome that results from applying things the same old way. The employee has been successful with the old way for so long and knows what he/she is dealing with.

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## **2. My Interpretation of Jared's Transfer of Learning Experiences and Perceptions**

*Why you decided to participate in the People-Oriented Management Program (POMP) and why you believe that some transfer occurred.*

You decided to participate in the program because you had heard that it was a good course. This course was actively promoted in the department and you thought that there might be something that you could learn or at least, reinforce what you already knew. You had taken similar courses over your career and you saw this course as a refresher as much as anything else.

From your perspective, to an extent, you applied some of what you learned. This application was related to the importance of listening to others and providing them with opportunities to speak their piece. This application manifested itself in managing your staff meetings. The course material has also helped you in the writing of decks for the minister, ensuring that you convey the message you intend. The material around teams and working groups, and different decision making processes were also helpful in your work efforts. The course reinforced what you already knew, brought that knowing forward in your consciousness, and gave you some new ideas and techniques to apply concerning your communication efforts. You were not however, if it was the course alone or your general work experience. The course did make a positive contribution to your communication efforts. You are not sure that someone could detect any changes in your on the job performance.

Your expectations of the program were to more effectively deal with difficult performance problems and lack of motivation, and to pick up some tips or skills on how to coach employees more effectively. You felt that your expectations were met to an extent as you did receive good tips about giving a poor performance and being clear about the messages you want to convey, and how different ways of conveying a message will have different impacts.

*When transfer entered your work experience.*

Before the course, you did not have any strongly formulated thoughts about the course. You regarded the course as refreshing your skills and knowledge, and giving you a good

understanding of what other departmental managers were receiving.

During the course you thought about how effective the instructor was - good experience, good communicator and effective teaching skills. The instructor met your needs as a learner for structure - a very organized, logical, methodical approach. You also felt the course content was very good and the team discussions very effective. You learned when teams, working groups and individual projects are appropriate. You also learned about active listening, the importance of considering other people's perceptions and how to deal with them, and believe that the Myers Briggs was great for your self-understanding.

Upon your return to the workplace, you recall thinking how much work you had to do. You also recall thinking that it was a good course, a good break, a good reinforcement and a good validation. You placed the course material on the shelf and had no real thoughts about applying the material. You did recall however, thinking about the importance of being a better listener and tried to apply that in your work activities.

### ***The How and What of your transfer of learning experience.***

Transfer of your learning occurred when you thought about what you learned concerning the communications part of the course, immediately upon your return to the office. You attempted to maintain the communications techniques that you learned and to improve your communications skills. You also tried to be conscious of the course material when expressing points in Ministerial decks and in your staff meetings.

From your perspective, you were not conscious of any particular steps that you employed in transferring your learning to your workplace efforts. You did however, become conscious of your own behavior particularly as it relates to your impatience with people (you are an IS/NTJ on the Myers Briggs). You now find yourself conscious of when you try to stop yourself from rushing to judgements. You now give people time to get their message out and you try to make sure you understand the intent of their message. Gaining a better understanding of yourself has been very beneficial to you.

Generally speaking, you do not employ particular strategies to enhance your transfer. You are not proactive for example, in engaging in discussions with colleagues or reflecting on what you learned. Your transfer approach is to let what you learn percolate and wait for the moment when you can apply what you have learned in a training program to your workplace efforts. When you are in a situation, that is when you make the connection between what you learned and your application. Part of your learning and application is a matter of life happening - personal experience and development. How that process happens exactly you can't say. From your perspective, a course is helpful to your job performance but it is useless if it is outside the context of your experience. To facilitate transfer you have to be open to the course content and open to learning through your work. When the two combine, your job performance is enhanced.

You do not employ different transfer strategies when you participate in internet training and attend a conference. Your strategy again involves the process of absorption and digestion of the training material. If you learn something that is groundbreaking, you will try to apply it immediately. Otherwise, if it's a general body of knowledge or indepth knowledge about a particular area, your process is to simply let the information percolate and emerge (i.e., apply it) at the appropriate time. The knowledge or skill is first internalized and then finds expression, in

an unconscious manner.

From your perspective, employees attitudes and skills that can enhance their learning and transfer efforts are an openness to new ideas, new techniques and new approaches. If employees go to a course with preset ideas, the course will not do them much good. The employees have to also be flexible, have good recall of the course material, have good organizational skills to go back to their workplace and review the material periodically, have the courage to change the way they do things, have the willingness to take risks, the ability to be analytical, and look for opportunities to apply what they learn.

The training methods that you found most useful to you applying what you learned in the POMP training program were the theory and the exchange between the participants. Generally speaking, you find the following training methods useful to your transfer efforts: the theory, the instructor and a structured learning environment. In terms of the instructor, you prefer someone who is a good resource, an expert in their field and an effective communicator who responds to questions. In terms of a structured learning environment, you prefer a logical flow to the material and to build on layers of information. You prefer to have someone convey information to you rather than reading about it. In some situations, you learn by doing things (e.g., golf swings or sailing).

The next time that you take a course, to apply more of what you learned, you thought that you would do nothing differently. From your perspective, for you to really change the way you do things there would have to be something so overwhelming, so radical that it impacts the way you view or approach the world. It would have to be something that “took the ground out from underneath you”. Immediate change would require a groundbreaking experience - a realization that you had been doing it all wrong before. Otherwise, you would tend to just let what you learn percolate within you.

You received the following support from your manager: *before the course* your manager informed you that the course was worthwhile and encouraged to take it. You received no managerial support *during or after the course*.

From your perspective, the interplay between the training program, the individual learner’s characteristics and the work environment on application, definitely exists but it is difficult to describe what it is and how it works. From your perspective, everyone approaches the world with their belief system about how the world works, in intricate detail. When employees take a course, if they are open to the information, then it adds to their belief system or effects it in some way. Employees can accept all, only part of what their hearing or reject it because their belief system is just too strong to accept the new information. When a belief system accepts the new information, the system is altered a bit. This altered state is applied to their work efforts.

You portrayed your work unit as a good, relaxed, respectful, and trusting one with many pressures and deadlines. You believe that It is a positive environment and one that facilitates transfer. From your perspective however, a work environment that hinders transfer is one where the demand for output and tight deadlines is high - it takes away from an employee’s ability to contemplate and think things through.

In your experience, a work environment’s impact on the transfer of learning is related to the nature of the work. If the organization is for example, running machines in a car factory, then the specific training on how to operate the equipment, check for quality, etc. has direct application to the person’s job. In your organization, you deal with more abstract, policy

development, analytical work. Training application is therefore, much more subtle. From your perspective, a work environment that facilitates transfer would be one where there is willingness to take risks, mistakes are accepted, the management team is supportive of employees' learning and transfer efforts, employees have opportunities to report back to their group on their training experiences (e.g., forces them to go through the training and reinforces their learning), opportunities for stretch assignments related to the learned skills (e.g., ask someone to do work they haven't done before), and opportunities to apply the new knowledge and skills acquired in their work tasks.

In terms of what needs to change in your organization to enhance employees' learning and transfer experiences, you believe that managers need to become more effective coaches. The organization needs to raise the corporate consciousness regarding the importance of coaching to an effective learning environment. In fact, good coaching skills should be part of the management selection process. Otherwise, HRB, Corporate Training Directorate, has been doing a good job of providing good courses and all employees have a reasonable "kick at the training can". This opportunity is extremely important for employees' learning and personal development as it creates a sense of fairness, respect and workplace well being.

### **3. My Interpretation of Bonnie's Transfer of Learning Experience**

*Why you decided to participate in the Power of Communication training program and why you believe that transfer occurred.*

You decided to participate in this training program because you thought that this course would help you deal with people more easily, particularly more difficult people, and improve your communication skills. You learned that you can not change people but that you can change your perceptions of them and how you respond to them, to not take things personally and to not get upset with aggressive people - it is their mannerisms, not a personal attack. You learned to really listen to people, to give them an opportunity to express themselves, to show them that you are listening to them, and to read body language more effectively. You believe that you are a more effective communicator and a better listener as a result of the course.

In terms of applying what you learned during the course to your workplace activities and enhancing your on-the-job performance, you believe that the course has helped you to overcome your shyness, to voice your opinion more assertively, to speak up at meetings and to speak out more readily in front of a lot of people. In your life outside of the office, you believe that you listen more to your children and give them the opportunity to express themselves more - you are not as quick to voice your opinion with them. All of these new understandings are partially a result of : a) the course and b) your accumulated experience. You were not certain whether colleagues have noticed a difference in your performance however.

Your expectations of the course were to communicate more effectively and from your perspective they were generally met. However, it was only through returning to the office and applying what you learned that you could be certain that your expectations were indeed met.

***When transfer entered your learning experience.***

Prior to the course, you thought about whether the training program would help you to deal with difficult people. Just prior to your course registration you had an experience with a difficult person and you felt that the course would have helped you to deal more effectively with that person/situation. You thought that the course would also help you in your everyday communications both inside and outside of the office.

During the course, you recall thinking that the course was enjoyable and the perspectives of other people around the room very interesting. You felt that you were not alone in what your thinking, other employees had experienced similar difficulties. This was reassuring to you. You thought that the instructor was excellent and brought the best out of the group, everyone got along quite well. The instructor made a big difference. She did a great job of involving everybody and you liked her style of instruction and openness. From your perspective, a course can be made or broken on the basis of the instructor.

Upon your return to the workplace, you initially thought the course would make a huge difference in your work life. It wasn't until this research interview however, when you looked back at your course manual that you realized you "had not stuck to your guns". You had not referred back to the manual to refresh your memory nor did you get together with some of the people who took the course afterwards (e.g., a month or two later) to discuss how they had applied what they learned, how they had changed and what they did differently in their work activities. From your perspective, such a discussion would have been helpful in reinforcing what was learned and the sharing of experiences may have given you some new ideas to further enhance your application.

In terms of your awareness of when you started to think about transferring the course content, you noted that: a) before registration as believed that the course content would be helpful in enhancing your on-the-job performance and b) immediately upon your return to your workplace as situations arose.

***The How and What of your transfer of learning experience.***

In terms of your transfer of learning process, you were not conscious of any particular steps that you took to transfer your learning to your workplace efforts or of how exactly you were going to change your communicate efforts. The transfer of that learning happened at a subconscious level (i.e., your mind went back to some of the things that you learned during the course and applied them as occasions arose at the office). You did however, upon your return to your workplace, speak with several people about the course and explained to them what you found useful. Going through the course material in your own mind to explain it to your colleagues may from your perspective, have enhanced the transfer of your learning.

You employ a similar transfer strategy when you participate in internet training or attend a conference. One strategy is to apply what you learn as soon as you return to the office. The practical application of your learning is key for you. Another useful strategy is to get together periodically with colleagues who took similar training, particularly telecommunications, to ensure that everyone has a clear understanding of what the information is and how to apply it.

The training methods that you found most useful to you applying what you learned in the

Power of Communications course were the team exercises and the theory. You noted that the training program got to the root of who you are and how you communicate - whether you are a good listener, a good communicator and have good interaction skills. You found the team building exercise where the individuals had to come to a consensus very useful - you had to voice and effectively communicate your opinion, be flexible and listen to other opinions, give and take, and be prepared to change your opinion as warranted.

From your perspective, employees' attitudes and skills that facilitate transfer are having a positive attitude, going into a course with some expectations, being open minded, being open to suggestions, being receptive to something new and having the ability to apply what you learn to your life in general.

Generally speaking, in your training program experiences, you find the following training methods most useful to your learning and transfer: having the opportunity to do a task or activity and practice a new skill, being placed right into the activity or the job task (e.g., a scenario or exercise), going away and doing your own thing, having time to really work on something, and participating in case studies either as an individual or as a team member. You did note that the case study does not need to be relevant to our work as you also learn a lot from general content case studies.

Upon reflection, the next time that you take a course, to apply more of what you learn, you would review the material periodically and participate in a follow-up session with other participants. From your perspective, follow-up is essential to transfer.

You received the following course support from your manager:

*before the training program* your manager was very supportive of you taking the course and discussed the course outline and benefits of the program with you. Your training request was approved without hesitation.

*during the training program* you received no support.

*after the training program* your manager met with you to discuss the benefits of the course and what you had learned. His feedback was very positive and he was receptive to your suggestion that he consider sending other colleagues on the course.

You perceive the interplay between the training program, the individual learner's characteristics and the work environment on application as one of the importance of holding a training program within walking distance of your place of work (i.e., easy access and does not require you to change your schedule as you have family responsibilities), the course is helpful to you in both your work and personal life, and the course is short in length (e.g., a couple of days due to your family responsibilities). The interplay is very much one of blending your personal and professional needs.

From your perspective, the work environment factors that facilitate your transfer are the: openness of the work environment, your freedom to discuss issues with your colleagues and management team, management's and your own expectation that you will apply some of what you learned, the receptivity of your colleagues in discussing what you learned or hearing some of your new ideas, your management team's general openness, support and encouragement of staff training. You noted that each year, a certain amount of money is set aside for employee training and employees are encouraged to take advantage of it. Your work environment is also proactive in informally mentoring new staff members - senior staff help out the new recruits. You did not perceive any work environment factors as inhibiting your transfer. In your opinion, the

department has done a good job of providing in-house training opportunities.

In your training program experiences, the main challenges that you have faced in applying what you learned in a course to your work activities were the workplace requirements. Too many demands in the workplace can make transfer difficult. Generally speaking however, even though a work environment may not be conducive to transfer, an individual can generally bring something back and apply it. An individual must want to bring back their learning and apply it otherwise, transfer won't happen. Further, if people take courses that are not directly related to their job, it is hard to apply what they learned. The employees have to see the linkages between what they are learning and what they will apply. With personal interest courses, an individual can usually apply what they learned to their work and home life, and see and make the linkages more easily. Not all courses are like that however. Management and colleagues must also be open to your learning experience and application. If they are not, the environment will not be conducive to application.

In your experience, a work environment that facilitates learning and transfer is one where there would be a frank discussion with management and colleagues regarding: a) what the training program was about, b) what you got out of it and c) how other employees might benefit from attending the program. You also noted that brown bag sessions where employees would discuss with other colleagues what they learned would also facilitate transfer. Having the opportunity to work on a project where you can apply what you learned, upon your return to the workplace, would reinforce the learning and enhance transfer - otherwise you tend to forget what was learned. People also have to have choice in participating in the training program. Managers have a role in helping employees put into play what they learned.

As a final note, you would not have participated in the Power of Communications training program if the course outline had mentioned videotaping and roleplaying. It is important for you to be comfortable with the training program in general and the requirements. From your perspective, videotaping may be a participation deterrent for many support staff.

#### **4. My Interpretation of Janice's Transfer of Learning Experience**

*Why you decided to participate in the Leadership Training Program and why you believe that transfer occurred.*

You decided to participate in this training program because you were hopeful that what you learned would help you in deciding whether you would seek to enter the executive ranks.

In terms of applying what you learned during the course to your workplace activities, you now ensure that your staff members are kept apprised of management board decisions, etc. - you either speak with staff members directly or pass the information along by e-mail. You are now more patient with staff, giving them the time they need to do their work and are more accepting of their ways. You no longer have to drive them but rather, coach them. You believe that now when you read information related to the budget or Speech from the Throne, you understand a lot more because you have the context - the what, how and why. As suggested at the course, you have a mentor who provides you with feedback and career guidance.

In terms of the training program enhancing your on-the-job performance, you believe that

the program has helped make you a better and smarter person. You perceive that your staff appreciates your efforts in sharing information which in turn, has enhanced your performance - you are a more effective manager. The governance portion of the training program also helped you in developing a more effective strategic plan - based on the what, how and why things work. This knowledge has increased your confidence level and in turn, your performance. The course has also caused you to seriously rethink your career - in the past you moved around a lot as job opportunities arose. Now, you are taking the time to think about and drive your career choices rather than simply accept job opportunities. You believe that as a result, you are a more effective manager.

Your expectations of the program were to further your self-knowledge and your knowledge of how the government operates. In terms of self-knowledge, you felt that you were already quite self-aware and in many respects, the course was a refresher for you. You did however, realize that even though you knew the information, you were not applying it. You also learned a lot about how the government operates, budgeting and managerial responsibilities. Your expectations were met.

### *When transfer entered your learning experience.*

Prior to the course, the e-mail that was forwarded to all departmental employees announcing and outlining the course struck you. The e-mail was addressed to all employees interested in entering the EX ranks. You thought that even if you didn't decide to enter the EX ranks in the future, the course would be helpful in making you a better person and a more effective manager.

During the course, you recall thinking that the governance part of the course was helpful in understanding how the government works, why certain decisions are taken and how this information would be relevant to your planning process. In the soft skills part of the course, you recall thinking that being a human being and trying to become a better human being are essential - what life and work are all about. This part of the course, reinforced your self-knowledge and helped you realize even more who, what you are and how your behavior affect people's lives. You realized the importance of effective leadership and communications skills. You also thought that the instructors were very good, complimented each other and interacted very well together. The presentation about yourself terrified you but you recall thinking why, they are all human beings too! Working in trios, you recall thinking that the people were very different from you. These differences helped you to look at people and issues very differently.

Upon your return to the workplace, you recall thinking "how am I going to apply that"? "What am I going to do now"? You did not have much time to think about applying what you learned because of your workload and the turmoil in your personal life.

In terms of your awareness of when you started to think about transferring the course content, you noted that it was during the course itself. During the theory, group discussions and chatting over coffee. These discussions triggered your thinking and helped you identify what you needed to enhance or change. After the course, you were aware of transferring the training program when you had flashes of course participants, discussions and situations, relevant to your daily work activities.

*The How and What of your transfer of learning experience.*

The training made you realize the impact that you have on your staff. The course also helped you to feel more professional (e.g., doing your best and being effective from 8:00 - 4:00), while at the same time taking things lighter (e.g., placing your job into perspective, it is a job, it does not deserve your heart and soul). You also learned not to judge people, particularly when it comes to people's decisions and where they are on the ladder of self-awareness. You also noted that the course changed your perceptions about politicians - they are skilled individuals, not just clowns or puppets.

In terms of your family life, your listening skills and open mindedness have improved regarding your sons. The course has also made you more sensitive and more objective - it has improved your relationships with loved ones. You have applied, in your interactions with your family members and partner, some of the coaching theory and skills. You find yourself sitting back and thinking more, and trying to listen to and guide your children.

In terms of your transfer of learning process, you were not aware of any particular steps that you employed. It was more a matter of the course making you aware of yourself and the governance structure and coming back to the workplace wanting and seeking to apply what you learned (e.g., sharing information with staff). You now make conscious efforts to change your previous behavior (e.g., when staff enter your office you no longer answer the phone or work on the computer). You are more patient with staff members and listen more attentively to them. You learn most effectively by self-reflection, trying things and by practicing new skills. It is important to you that the course material be interesting and to interact with the participants and instructor to not just sit and listen.

From your perspective, you employ a similar transfer strategy when you participate in internet training or attend a conference. However, your preference is not to read material on the internet as you prefer interaction with other people. You prefer formal training over internet training. In terms of conference attendance, if it is an interesting and short conference, you generally learn a lot because you listen attentively. Talking with numerous people and networking are important transfer strategies for you in general.

The training methods that you found most useful to you applying what you learned in the Leadership Training Program were reflection on the training materials, interaction with others and hearing about other people's experiences and how they responded to them.

Generally speaking, in your training program experiences, you find the following training methods most useful to your learning and transfer: the opportunity to apply what you are learning (e.g., case studies). Practicing the what and how of the information or skill (e.g., put you in the water with someone who says these are the movements and this is how you do it, and you will learn). Completing exercises is a very important training method for you.

Upon reflection, the next time that you take a course, to apply more of what you learn, you thought there might be a lot of things that you would do differently but believed that it was unlikely that you would do them. Time is a real issue for you, you don't have it nor take it (i.e., after work is your own and family time). You believed however, that you would need to apply yourself to reading more and getting deeper into what you learned because a course only teaches the surface knowledge or skill.

From your perspective, employees' attitudes and skills that facilitate transfer are: open

mindedness, knowing that you don't something/everything, listening and recognizing that part of your learning will come from listening and interacting with your counterparts.

You received the following course support from your manager:

*before the training program* there was not much support because you are quite independent in your work. You had also changed bosses - your former boss signed the request and your present boss was informed that you were going on the training.

*during the training program* your boss was very supportive in that he gave you the time to go to the training and you knew that he would not request you to return early because of work demands. Training is a priority.

*after the training program* he was very supportive of your efforts to apply what you learned (e.g., staff meetings, planning decisions).

You perceive the interplay between the training program, the individual learner's characteristics and the work environment on application as the combination of how one works with the other. You perceive that interplay as one of employees who really want to learn and believe that they can do a better job as a result of attending a course, and have their bosses support. If these factors are present, then the employees will likely have a more positive training experience. All three factors must be examined together as one factor affects the other. A boss can influence employees' learning and application. If he/she is *not* supportive, employees' learning and transfer experience will not be as effective.

From your perspective, the work environment factors that facilitated your transfer are the: the conduciveness of your physical work environment (i.e., closed offices are conducive to the type of work you do), the bureaucracy is not as demanding, your management trusts in your decision making, you are given the opportunity to do what you think needs to be done (i.e., empowered), your training efforts are always supported by upper management, and your staff believes in you.

From your perspective, the work environment factors that inhibited your transfer are: being way too busy. Having no time to read or reflect on what you learned.

In your training program experiences, the main challenges that you have faced in applying what you learned in a training program to your work activities involved changing yourself - respecting people more, learning more about the subject, learning more about yourself and managing yourself.

From your perspective, things that need to change in the department to facilitate employees' learning efforts are as follows:

- senior management must be in tune with themselves and with their life balance in order to help the learning of others. Without this support and this consciousness, employees' learning and transfer efforts will not be facilitated. Management is starting to acknowledge the requirement to help people develop and move up in their careers.
  - the younger generation is forcing this change - they are more conscious about who they are and how they feel.
  - continuous change is necessary and productivity in the department will not change until our society and management's attitudes change. Productivity is not about economics, it is about people's attitudes.
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## 5. My Interpretation of Blake's Transfer of Learning Experience

### *Why you decided to participate in the People Oriented Management Program (POMP) and why you believe that transfer occurred.*

You decided to participate in this training program because of your supervisor's suggestion. She suggested that all new supervisors consider registering for the course.

In terms of applying what you learned during the course to your workplace activities you found that the self-awareness that you gained through understanding your Myers-Briggs profile was very useful. You now try to be more patient, to let things go more (e.g., not feeling badly about talking to staff about performance problems and dealing with their reactions), you seek out your supervisor's support more, you speak with employees more openly about performance problems and you are more confident in facing the consequences, you are empathetic to people's situations but are much more clear about the bottom line (e.g., they are there to work) and you deal more effectively with people. In terms of enhancing your on-the-job performance, you can not say with a high degree of confidence that it was the course only. You have been attending courses and seminars concerning management and psychology for a while. You estimate that less than 10% of what you learned in the course was actually applied due to the "real" world demands - your work is demanding and your boss may want something done a certain way - leaving the course information to fade away.

Your expectations of the POMP were to get a better understanding of how people in other organizations deal with disciplinary actions and poor performance problems. You were also interested in better understanding how you communicate, interact with others, listen to others and take their interests into account. Be clearer about what you say and how it is perceived. In terms of whether your expectations were met, you found it hard to say - the actual process of successfully defending disciplinary action is long and there are many other work demands. You noted however that you have a few more tools that you can rely on, estimated that 30% of what you learned is still top of your mind and that you can revert to it as needed.

### *When transfer entered your learning experience.*

Prior to the course, even though your supervisor had suggested the training, you felt that there were things that you could learn.

During the course, you recall thinking about relating the course material and discussions to your work situation and trying to position yourself within those contexts (e.g., what else you could have done in situations particularly as they related to knowing yourself, the other person and how to communicate more effectively, how to be more effective in your work, how you might have been more proactive, what you could have done rather than what you did, and how to deal with resistance to change). You found the instructor had a lot of experience and a good knowledge base. However, due to having to share the class with other individuals, you recall that the content was not always directed at issues that were important to you.

Upon your return to the workplace, you recall thinking that the theory, exercises and interactions with participants had provided you with a set of tools that would facilitate your workplace efforts. Through time however, you recall forgetting some of the information and

techniques due to the demands in the office and the workload.

In terms of your awareness of when you started to think about transferring the course content to your work activities, you thought soon after your return from the course (e.g., at weekly or biweekly meetings and in performance measurement activities).

***The How and What of your transfer of learning experience.***

In terms of your transfer of learning process, you tend to take notes and refer back to them and the course materials occasionally. You also talk with colleagues either about the course material itself, if they attended too, or discuss situations with other individuals (e.g., seek their feedback/guidance on your thinking). You also hold meetings to talk about and share what you learned on the course. Generally speaking, you take notes, gather different insights, participate in self-help courses, attend seminars, ask questions, draw on the instructors' expertise and pass information along to colleagues. If courses are not supported at work, you pursue them on your own.

One of the highlights of the course for you was gaining greater self-awareness (e.g., understanding what your limits are, what you can do, doing your best, taking things slowly, realizing that a problem will not go away immediately, not jumping into a problem, letting things evolve, reading up on things, not making quick judgements and exchanging information with others). The course also helped you understand the dynamics of groups and working with different personalities. You also mentioned that the course may have helped you in your church committee work (e.g., understanding different perspectives and using use your planning and organizational skills). It was hard however, for you to say if the POMP really helped you in your committee work because you tend to read a lot anyway. You noted that you came back from the course with 70% of what you learned but as time passed the material faded away.

You employ a similar transfer strategy when you participate in internet training or attend a conference but noted that if there is an instructor, you will probably retain the information for a longer period of time.

The training methods that you found most useful to you applying what you learned in the POMP were the theory, problems solving exercises and the exercises related to communications. You stated that applying skills learned in training is very different from real life application as training can not give you the emotional impact that you face in the "real world".

Generally speaking, in your training program experiences, you find the following training methods useful to your learning and transfer experience: a combination of case studies, team work, work related problem solving, videos, time for interaction and exercises. You however, prefer real life videos as a training method.

From your perspective, employees' attitudes and skills that facilitate transfer are: open mindedness, having the choice to participate, expecting to learn something, ability to listen attentively, note taking, group participation and practicing the skill. You also noted the importance of participating in an interesting topic, having the opportunity to enhance your knowledge, a skill or an attitude, and the materials' relevance to your personal and professional life.

Upon reflection, the next time that you take a course, to apply more of what you learn, you would periodically review the material more, to refresh your memory. You would also think

more seriously about (i.e., reflect) or how you could apply the material when something comes up. You would also refer back to your notes more often, discuss the information now and then with colleagues and read about related topics.

You received the following course support from your manager:

*before the training program* your manager suggested that you attend the course.

*during the training program* no support.

*after the training program* your manager was interested in understanding what you learned and received your feedback. She is very supportive of staff training in general.

You perceive the interplay between the training program, the individual learner's characteristics and the work environment on application as one of there being a clear connection between the three. Just learning on a course is not sufficient, an employee needs to have some flow though from the course into the workplace and must continue with their learning efforts. Generally, a learner must be open and attentive. In terms of the work environment, employees have to be open to all learning opportunities, learning new things and changing with the times (e.g., new job demands). If employees are open to learning, they are able to see things that are applicable to their work, colleagues and themselves. All three factors come together - a little bit from each and you come out with something a little greater.

You portrayed your work environment as one that was until recently, not supportive of employee training. It is also a culture that is "very different", it is not employee centered, employees are from very varied educational backgrounds and there is a large difference between professional and administrative support group classifications. These employees' work efforts are not recognized or appreciated.

From your perspective, the work environment factors that facilitated transfer are your supervisor's support of your learning efforts and upper management recent interest in and support of the employees. Your management now asks for updates on employees' training efforts and shows interest in what employees learn, seeking employees' opinions on how the information could be applied.

The major work environment factor that inhibited your transfer is the culture. The culture is one of management not dealing effectively with low performing employees. Rather, they choose to let things go, to pretend that situations do not exist and ignore bad behavior. New management members inherit the employee problems. Also, instilling new ideas into the organization is very difficult. The culture is not receptive to new ideas and does not want to create any waves. The culture is very hard to change. Finally, high workload, the boss's preference for things to be done in a certain way and the bureaucratic process stifle creativity, learning, transfer and change.

In your training program experiences, the main challenges that you have faced in applying what you learned to your work activities is the bureaucracy - the structure is not flexible and creativity is limited, affecting any change involves committee after committee decision making. You find that sometimes memo writing and talking with people can bring about change as it slowly creates an awareness or a willingness to change, one small step at a time.

From your perspective, things that need to change in the department to facilitate employees' learning efforts is each employee's attitude. An employee must want to be challenged, seek to grow and learn something new. Learning can not be forced. People must understand that times are changing, globally and in the organization, and must continue to learn

and change. The Personal Learning Plans should facilitate learning and application.

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## 6. My Interpretation of Susan's Transfer of Learning Experience

*Why you decided to participate in the Leadership Training Program and why you believe that transfer occurred.*

You decided to participate in this training program because you were hopeful that what you learned would help you in deciding whether you would seek to enter the executive ranks.

In terms of applying what you learned during the course to your workplace activities, you now ensure that your staff members are kept apprised of management board decisions, etc. - you either speak with staff members directly or pass the information along by e-mail. You are now more patient with staff, giving them the time they need to do their work and are more accepting of their ways. You no longer have to drive them but rather, coach them. You believe that now when you read information related to the budget or Speech from the Throne, you understand a lot more because you have the context - the what, how and why. As suggested at the course, you have a mentor who provides you with feedback and career guidance.

In terms of the training program enhancing your on-the-job performance, you believe that the program has helped make you a better and smarter person. You perceive that your staff appreciates your efforts in sharing information which in turn, has enhanced your performance - you are a more effective manager. The governance portion of the training program also helped you in developing a more effective strategic plan - based on the what, how and why things work. This knowledge has increased your confidence level and in turn, your performance. The course has also caused you to seriously rethink your career - in the past you moved around a lot as job opportunities arose. Now, you are taking the time to think about and drive your career choices rather than simply accept job opportunities. You believe that as a result, you are a more effective manager.

Your expectations of the program were to further your self-knowledge and your knowledge of how the government operates. In terms of self-knowledge, you felt that you were already quite self-aware and in many respects, the course was a refresher for you. You did however, realize that even though you knew the information, you were not applying it. You also learned a lot about how the government operates, budgeting and managerial responsibilities. Your expectations were met.

*When transfer entered your learning experience.*

Prior to the course, the e-mail that was forwarded to all departmental employees announcing and outlining the course struck you. The e-mail was addressed to all employees interested in entering the EX ranks. You thought that even if you didn't decide to enter the EX ranks in the future, the course would be helpful in making you a better person and a more effective manager.

During the course, you recall thinking that the governance part of the course was helpful in understanding how the government works, why certain decisions are taken and how this

information would be relevant to your planning process. In the soft skills part of the course, you recall thinking that being a human being and trying to become a better human being are essential - what life and work are all about. This part of the course, reinforced your self-knowledge and helped you realize even more who, what you are and how your behavior affect people's lives. You realized the importance of effective leadership and communications skills. You also thought that the instructors were very good, complimented each other and interacted very well together. The presentation about yourself terrified you but you recall thinking why, they are all human beings too! Working in trios, you recall thinking that the people were very different from you. These differences helped you to look at people and issues very differently.

Upon your return to the workplace, you recall thinking "how am I going to apply that"? "What am I going to do now"? You did not have much time to think about applying what you learned because of your workload and the turmoil in your personal life.

In terms of your awareness of when you started to think about transferring the course content, you noted that it was during the course itself. During the theory, group discussions and chatting over coffee. These discussions triggered your thinking and helped you identify what you needed to enhance or change. After the course, you were aware of transferring the training program when you had flashes of course participants, discussions and situations, relevant to your daily work activities.

### ***The How and What of your transfer of learning experience.***

The training made you realize the impact that you have on your staff. The course also helped you to feel more professional (e.g., doing your best and being effective from 8:00 - 4:00), while at the same time taking things lighter (e.g., placing your job into perspective, it is a job, it does not deserve your heart and soul). You also learned not to judge people, particularly when it comes to people's decisions and where they are on the ladder of self-awareness. You also noted that the course changed your perceptions about politicians - they are skilled individuals, not just clowns or puppets.

In terms of your family life, your listening skills and open mindedness have improved regarding your sons. The course has also made you more sensitive and more objective - it has improved your relationships with loved ones. You have applied, in your interactions with your family members and partner, some of the coaching theory and skills. You find yourself sitting back and thinking more, and trying to listen to and guide your children.

In terms of your transfer of learning process, you were not aware of any particular steps that you employed. It was more a matter of the course making you aware of yourself and the governance structure and coming back to the workplace wanting and seeking to apply what you learned (e.g., sharing information with staff). You now make conscious efforts to change your previous behavior (e.g., when staff enter your office you no longer answer the phone or work on the computer). You are more patient with staff members and listen more attentively to them. You learn most effectively by self-reflection, trying things and by practicing new skills. It is important to you that the course material be interesting and to interact with the participants and instructor to not just sit and listen.

From your perspective, you employ a similar transfer strategy when you participate in internet training or attend a conference. However, your preference is not to read material on the

internet as you prefer interaction with other people. You prefer formal training over internet training. In terms of conference attendance, if it is an interesting and short conference, you generally learn a lot because you listen attentively. Talking with numerous people and networking are important transfer strategies for you in general.

The training methods that you found most useful to you applying what you learned in the Leadership Training Program were reflection on the training materials, interaction with others and hearing about other people's experiences and how they responded to them.

Generally speaking, in your training program experiences, you find the following training methods most useful to your learning and transfer: the opportunity to apply what you are learning (e.g., case studies). Practicing the what and how of the information or skill (e.g., put you in the water with someone who says these are the movements and this is how you do it, and you will learn). Completing exercises is a very important training method for you.

Upon reflection, the next time that you take a course, to apply more of what you learn, you thought there might be a lot of things that you would do differently but believed that it was unlikely that you would do them. Time is a real issue for you, you don't have it nor take it (i.e., after work is your own and family time). You believed however, that you would need to apply yourself to reading more and getting deeper into what you learned because a course only teaches the surface knowledge or skill.

From your perspective, employees' attitudes and skills that facilitate transfer are: open mindedness, knowing that you don't something/everything, listening and recognizing that part of your learning will come from listening and interacting with your counterparts.

You received the following course support from your manager:

*before the training program* there was not much support because you are quite independent in your work. You had also changed bosses - your former boss signed the request and your present boss was informed that you were going on the training.

*during the training program* your boss was very supportive in that he gave you the time to go to the training and you knew that he would not request you to return early because of work demands. Training is a priority.

*after the training program* he was very supportive of your efforts to apply what you learned (e.g., staff meetings, planning decisions).

You perceive the interplay between the training program, the individual learner's characteristics and the work environment on application as the combination of how one works with the other. You perceive that interplay as one of employees who really want to learn and believe that they can do a better job as a result of attending a course, and have their bosses support. If these factors are present, then the employees will likely have a more positive training experience. All three factors must be examined together as one factor affects the other. A boss can influence employees' learning and application. If he/she is *not* supportive, employees' learning and transfer experience will not be as effective.

From your perspective, the work environment factors that facilitated your transfer are the: the conduciveness of your physical work environment (i.e., closed offices are conducive to the type of work you do), the bureaucracy is not as demanding, your management trusts in your decision making, you are given the opportunity to do what you think needs to be done (i.e., empowered), your training efforts are always supported by upper management, and your staff believes in you.

From your perspective, the work environment factors that inhibited your transfer are: being way too busy. Having no time to read or reflect on what you learned.

In your training program experiences, the main challenges that you have faced in applying what you learned in a training program to your work activities involved changing yourself - respecting people more, learning more about the subject, learning more about yourself and managing yourself.

From your perspective, things that need to change in the department to facilitate employees' learning efforts are as follows:

- senior management must be in tune with themselves and with their life balance in order to help the learning of others. Without this support and this consciousness, employees' learning and transfer efforts will not be facilitated. Management is starting to acknowledge the requirement to help people develop and move up in their careers.
- the younger generation is forcing this change - they are more conscious about who they are and how they feel.
- continuous change is necessary and productivity in the department will not change until our society and management's attitudes change. Productivity is not about economics, it is about people's attitudes.

## 7. My Interpretation of Joseph's Transfer of Learning Experience

*Why you decided to participate in the Power of Communications and why you believe that transfer occurred.*

You decided to participate in this training program because you thought that it would improve your communication skills.

In terms of applying what you learned during the course to your workplace activities you could not identify specific examples. You noted that you were not conscious of any particular examples, likely because you had internalized what you had learned. You did recall however, learning how to write with a purpose in mind and to communicate with a purpose but you couldn't say whether it was this particular course that re-enforced that learning. In many respects, the course reinforced what you already knew and put that knowing into a more focused manner.

In terms of the training program enhancing your on-the-job performance, you could not say - you felt that would be a judgement call. You noted that you had probably picked up some things and internalized them but you couldn't attribute your enhanced performance to the course alone - you do read a lot about various subject matter. You find most courses do enhance your on-the-job performance somewhat but suggested that only 20% of all course materials are actually new for you. The other 80% is a reinforcement of what you already know.

Your expectations of the course were to improve your communications and to receive some instruction along those lines. Your expectations were met.

***When Transfer entered your learning experience.***

Prior to the course, you recall thinking that there is so much miscommunication and you wanted to understand if there were ways to improve your communications - in terms of the message that people receive and in terms of their response to it.

During the course, you recall thinking that you were most interested in understanding the clarity of the message and how to communicate it, and the negotiations part of the course.

Upon your return to the workplace, you recall thinking more about what you were writing and how the message might be received by the other party.

In terms of your awareness of when you started to think about transferring the course content, you noted that you were not really aware. You noted that a lot of things get internalized and you are therefore, not conscious of course information as you are conducting your work activities. You do not think, oh ya, this was from course A or course C, or course A or course C would be helpful here.

***The How and What of your transfer of learning experience.***

In terms of whether you do anything differently as a result of the course in your work activities, you were more aware of the importance of the message and communicating it, and to test your assumptions. You did not think however, that your communication patterns had changed with your family members. Your communications have always been transparent - you do not make a commitment and not follow through on it.

In terms of your transfer of learning process, you stated that it is on an ad hoc basis. You may use something from a course but it is in no particular sequence (e.g., not in keeping with the course material specifics). Your transfer process is a matter of you conducting your work, recalling something that either the instructor might have told you or something from the course material, and then introducing it into your work activities - at a point in time, something clicks and you use it. You generally let things percolate within you and at appropriate times, depending on the demand of the situation, your knowledge or skill comes forward.

From your perspective, you were not aware of any particular strategies that you employ when you participate in either formal training courses, internet training or attend a conference.

The training method that you found most useful to you applying what you learned in the Power of Communications was the desert walk exercise.

Generally speaking, in your training program experiences, you find the following training methods most useful to your learning and transfer: by example (e.g., something that is going to be or could be used in your work), case studies, working on real work scenarios and receiving course materials prior to the course (e.g., a course overview).

From your perspective, employees' attitudes and skills that facilitate transfer are: attending a course out of interest, having the choice of training program (i.e., not being sent by management), a positive attitude, opportunity to practice what you learned (e.g., like medical doctor residency), opportunity for follow-up and the discipline to read your notes.

Upon reflection, the next time that you take a course, to apply more of what you learn, you were not sure what you would do exactly because you never thought about it. It would also depend on the course, does it have immediate application or is it a general knowledge course

(e.g., broadening your horizons).

You received the following course support from your manager:

*before the training program* your manager simply approved your training request form.

*during the training program* your manager did not provide any support.

*after the training program* your manager did not provide any support - you have never been asked by a manager are you using the course material or what was the course all about?

You perceive the interplay between the training program, the individual learner's characteristics and the work environment on application as one of individuals applying what they learn within 48 hours of training - they are more likely to retain what they learned. If the work activities are diverse, employees may not be able to use what they learned right away - application becomes a challenge. The interplay is very much driven by the type of work that the person does. Targeted training (e.g., specifically a job such as lan support) is more likely to be used right away. General training is not directly applied, it's in the back of the individual's mind.

From your perspective, the work environment factors that facilitated your transfer are colleagues speaking the same language (i.e., more or less equally knowledgeable about the work) and trust among employees.

In your opinion, the work environment factors that inhibit your transfer are the: people complaining about things just to complain (e.g., wanting to be copied on all e-mails whether relevant to their work or not), people's egos and teams for teams sake.

In your training program experiences, the main challenges that you faced in applying what you learned in a course to your work activities were the courses not being applicable to your work and not always having the opportunity to apply what you learned right away.

From your perspective, the thing that needs to change in the department to facilitate employees' learning and transfer efforts is: employees should go through a half day reinforcement or refresher course a few weeks following a course to ensure that employees have understood how to apply the material in their workplace efforts.

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## Appendix I The Transfer of Learning Focus Group Narrative

### Introduction

The following narrative provides a report on the focus group discussions. Part 1, Exploring New Territories, addresses two of the questions that arose from the interviews for which further exploration was sought. The focus group participants were asked for their perceptions and experiences related to those questions. Part 2, Validation of the Findings, addresses the findings which arose from the interviews and for which confirmation was sought. The participants were requested to confirm, add to (e.g., is anything missing) or amend (e.g., a finding is not relevant) the findings.

### PART 1 Exploring New Territories

In this section, the focus group questions are enumerated followed by a narrative of the discussions.

**Question # 1 - “How am I going to apply this”? What kind of issues would raise this concern? Was it a matter of how, when, what and/or who?**

One of the participants commented that due to the short length of and amount of material covered in the training course, a mentor was essential to the application of the knowledge and skills. This individual further suggested that being coached and coaching others, leaders modelling the required behaviours, and the learner referring periodically to the course materials and additional references were all important to application.

Other participants suggested that it was more a question of culture and time. Culture in terms of the organization’s commitment to developing employees, accepting and integrating (i.e., application) what the employees learned (e.g., new ideas and ways of doing things) and not always focussing on the job demands first. Time in terms of managers permitting employees to actually: a) pursue the application of what was learned and b) change the way they formerly did things. Other participants suggested that culture also included employees’ mistrust of the organization’s training motives - a flavour of the month type training but no real change was actually being sought. On occasion, the organization will state that it supports the employees’ need to continuously learn and develop but it is often only talk, it is not actioned. The organization needs to be clear whether employees’ training and development are really supported, and there must be a commitment to them. Employees, on the other hand, are sometimes not willing to go on courses or change their ways of doing things/behaviours.

Another participant suggested that the question of application was never a concern. Rather, it was more a matter of him absorbing the information into his general body of experience, letting the information come up and applying it as needed.

One participant added that the question of application depends on why learners take the

training - to further their career, to be a better person or boss, for example. If the learners entered the training with one notion (e.g., leadership/career development) but found that this was not what they really did want from the training after all, then the question of how to apply arises - it makes a difference in how and what they learn, and apply.

The attitude of the learner was also raised. In some cases an employee is allocated a certain amount of training each year and is expected to take it, or the manager may have suggested that the employee go on the training. In such instances, the employees may attend the training but "not really (be) there". These situations impede application. If the learners are however, open to the training they will learn, even if it is only one or two things. These one or two things will make a difference. The learners must believe that they will learn something and apply it. The learners' desire to change is important and in some ways, the only thing that individuals can actually effect any change in. Others added that the wide application of the training to the learner's personal, professional and social life is key.

It was mentioned that it is important to recognize that organizational change occurs in small increments. If a trainee applies only one thing that they learned in the six months to a year following the training, that one thing will make a difference all around. It is the collection of these small things that change a culture. If employees, for example, think that a manager is 3% more effective after a training program that can make a huge, positive difference. It is the collection of these changes that will help employees become better bosses themselves.

A number of suggestions were made to facilitate application. For example, provide all employees with specific training in order to really change the culture - the employees must understand why and how things are being done, and be sensitized to the changes. The training of all employees is important if general organizational change is to take place - the identified change must permeate the organization. Employees should also be sensitized to the managers' leadership training courses so that the employees are open to new leadership ideas and their application. Finally, an organization should require big change throughout the organization but expect incremental.

**Question # 2 - Is one of the transfer factors: a) more b) least important than the others? Which one and why? Do some factors work together? Is there a relationship between the three? If so, can you describe the relationship? (The three transfer factors were identified in a diagram - the training program, individual's characteristics and organizational climate).**

One participant suggested that the individual's characteristics was the most important factor - no receptivity, nothing much happens. This factor however, must work in conjunction with the training program. There must be a reciprocity between these two factors. The individual's characteristics building on the training program will eventually change the organizational climate.

Another participant suggested that the organizational climate is critical. The organization must believe in training programs, and allow employees time for learning and application. The relationship is one that starts with the organization supporting the learning organization concept and putting mechanisms in place such as providing training programs and opportunities for assignments. If the scenario however, is one where individuals pursue training on their own

accord, committing their own personal time and money to learning and career development, then the organizational climate was not believed to be as important.

The relationship between the transfer factors depends on your starting point - your assumptions. If, for example, the organization is not supportive of training, it is a none starter. There has to be some organizational infrastructure or policy position that supports the concept of employee training and development. The starting point is a supportive organization.

Other participants suggested that all three factors are important. No one factor is more important than the other. There must be a good combination between the three in order for the training program, learning and transfer to be effective. It is a matter of the synergy, how the factors intertwine, that will determine transfer. All three factors are equal and influence each other. Change one of the components and you get a different result, its that complex (e.g., one person in one organization participating in one training program will make one result. Have a different individual within the same organization and training program, and you get a different result).

Another participant stated that the relationship between the three factors is as follows: the organizational climate, or the institutional viewpoint, influences the training programs developed, the types of courses offered, content, etc. Another participant noted that targeted organizational training is important - a program that is targeted to the needs of the employees and the organization. In this case, the organization would seek to understand the current needs and what it wants to accomplish, develop the training program and identify the individuals who should take the training. This will likely result in the biggest bang for the program. All three transfer factors must come together, in a focussed fashion, to achieve the organization's goals.

The training program itself can also effect the organizational climate indirectly, through the participants. The training influences the employees who in turn influence the organization. It is this changing of the people within the collective consciousness that influences the organization.

## **PART 2**

### **The Findings**

In this section, the findings from the research interviews and their contexts are identified, followed by the focus group discussions if any, for each finding. No discussion denotes agreement, as indicated by nods around the boardroom table. Part A addresses the general issues raised during the interviews while Part B addresses the challenges raised.

#### **PART A:**

##### **The General Issues**

1. **The importance of the learner.** The need for the learner to be open, to want to learn, apply and grow, to look for application opportunities both during and after the training program, to be disciplined and to refer back to the course materials, to read widely, to continue on with learning and to share experiences with colleagues and course participants.

*No discussion.*

2. **The importance of interaction, dialogue, and sharing experiences with course participants during and following the course.** Following up with participants after the course is extremely important to transfer, to have the opportunity to understand what and how other participants applied the material, and engage in discussions as to what changed in them with respect to their behaviors.

***Discussion:***

One of the participants questioned that while interaction during the course was necessary and an important part of learning, in his experience he never followed up with other course participants. He suggested that this was great in theory but does anyone ever phone other participants up and ask a question subsequent to the training program?

Another participant suggested that in his case, it happens often enough. Not with every participant but certainly with some. It was explained to the participants that during the interviews, some of the interview participants had suggested that one of the things they would change when they did a course the next time was to have an opportunity with the facilitator and other participants to get together again to discuss what was the most important thing they learned and how they were applying it, for example. Such discussions, it was believed, would help the participants to engage in further application. A focus group participant affirmed this finding.

3. **The importance of follow-up with managers and colleagues upon return to the workplace.** In terms of the managers, discussions as to what was learned, how the information can be applied and how others might benefit from such training. With colleagues, what was useful, what they might find interesting, what they might want to consider, and them possibly attending the next course that is offered.

***No discussion.***

4. **The importance of the application of training materials to everyday life and looking at real-life work situations during the training.** Many of the participants spoke about the importance of the training being relevant to their personal life, professional and social life, and having the opportunity to look at real-life work situations during the training.

***No discussion.***

5. **The importance of learning by doing, having the opportunity to practice the new skills and knowledge during and after the training, and using the training immediately after the course.** Many of the participants cited the opportunity to, upon their return to work, participate in a new project, to have a new assignment, to try to apply their new knowledge and skills, and having sufficient practice opportunities during the training to gain the confidence with the knowledge and skills before returning to the workplace. Participants also spoke of the importance of using the training immediately after the course as they felt that if it was not used immediately, they would tend to forget it.

***Discussion:***

The necessity to apply immediately following the course was questioned. A university course was raised as an example. Integrated calculus or applied math, for example, are not necessarily used in day to day life but the courses are mandatory because they change the way you think. In a course like math, the individual may never use it again in his/her work or life in general. The same can be said with some training courses.

While you may not apply “it right away”, it changes the way the “wheels turn”. It is not applied literally, it is applied in a different way.

6. **Particular steps that were employed to transfer knowledge from a training program to the workplace. The cognitive verses the activity based approach.** Some interviewees spoke about the how of transfer in terms of a cognitive based approach. The knowledge or skill first getting internalized - as they moved through their work day something clicked and they used the information. The information was in the back of their mind, they brought it forward and applied it as necessary. Other participants described the how in more activities based terms - I refer to my manual, I talk with colleagues, I read more extensively about the subject matter, I want to learn and to apply. This approach was driven by the participant in terms of activities.

**Discussion:**

One participant affirmed her approach - it is activity based. She referred to her manual and read leadership reports, documents and literature, and remarked that “I have to feed constantly my interest” by reading, etc. She also noted that sharing her management interest and modelling her behavior influences her employees.

Another participant acknowledged that he was very much in the cognitive school and commented that it goes back to who you are and how your personality is constructed.

**PART B:**

**The Challenges**

7. **Time.** *Before* the course some participants were aware of the work demands so they chose a shorter course; *during* the course not enough time to experiment, practice and receive feedback from the instructor or the course participants; *after* the course many of the participants arrived back at the office with their workload waiting for them, their work demands were such that there was no time to reflect on what was learned, to try to apply new things, to refer to notes, etc. There was also a belief that sometimes it was easier and more expedient to do things the same old way than to apply something new.

**No discussion.**

**Changing oneself.** Learning more about the subject matter, being open to the learning, referring to materials, and changing one’s perspectives and behaviors. Very much centered on the learner.

**Discussion:**

Changing oneself was not regarded as a challenge by one participant. Individuals are changed by having taken the course. They are influenced by the changes and people around them. “They may not know it but they are, they have been”. Changing oneself was seen to be more activity based, as opposed to a challenge. Other participants questioned why an individual would change him or herself. It was more a matter of evolving and they suggested that point 2 remain as a challenge but refer to evolving oneself. All participants agreed with this suggestion.

**Work environment - the culture and the bureaucracy.** The *culture* was averse to risk, was not open to new ideas, the boss didn’t really want to hear about new ideas, creativity was limited, mistakes were not forgiven and little management interest in employees’

learning. The *bureaucracy* was discussed in terms of the hierarchy, all of the approval levels that a decision had to go through, and bosses wanting work to be done in a certain way.

*No discussion.*

***General discussion on the challenges:***

One participant questioned whether motivation should be added to the challenges list. An individual's motivation (e.g., a promotion or time away from the office) would influence many of the other challenges. The participant was uncertain if motivation should be included under evolving oneself, was a separate challenge, or whether it was created by all the other challenges, occurred before the others or at the same time. There was no further discussion on this.